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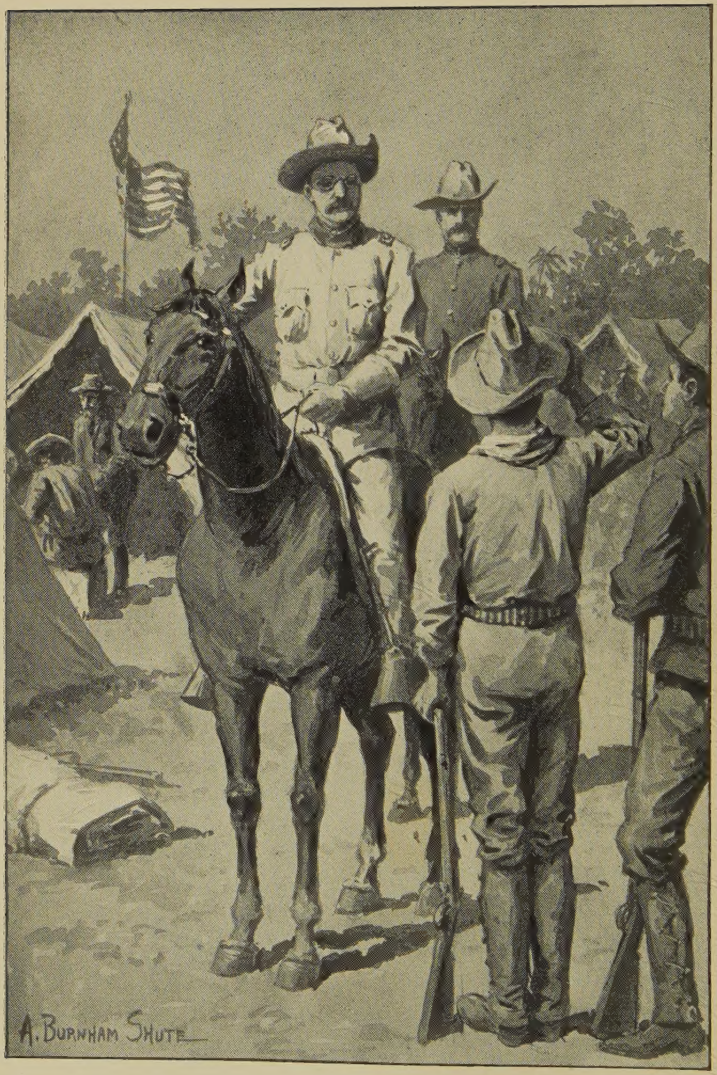

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Old Glory Series

A YOUNG VOLUNTEER IN CUBA

OR

FIGHTING FOR THE SINGLE STAR

BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

AUTHOR OF "UNDER DEWEY AT MANILA" "FIGHTING IN CUBAN WATERS" "RICHARD DARE'S VENTURE" "OLIVER BRIGHT'S SEARCH" "TO ALASKA FOR GOLD" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

A. B. SHUTE

BOSTON

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A YOUNG VOLUNTEER IN CUBA.

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Norwood Press
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Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

PREFACE

"A Young Volunteer in Cuba," although a complete story in itself, forms the second volume of the "Old Glory Series," a line of works embracing scenes and incidents of our war with Spain.

In the first volume of the series, the author told of the daring adventures of Larry Russell while fighting under Dewey at Manila. In the present book is followed the equally daring adventures of Ben Russell, Larry's older brother, who, joining the volunteers from New York State, is mustered into the United States army and sent by transport to Cuba, there to participate in that hazardous campaign which ended in the fall of Santiago and was one of the direct means of bringing hostilities to a speedy termination.

It may be possible that Ben's bravery has been overdrawn; yet, if the narratives of scores of soldiers who took part in the invasion of Cuba are to be believed, the sturdy youth's gallantry was no

greater than that of many others who shed their blood for liberty and humanity. The young volunteer went into the contest convinced that the cause was just, and that a Divine Providence would not let a just cause fail; consequently he was confident of success, and "confidence is half the battle."

Regarding the historical portions of the book, the author would state that they have been drawn from the very latest and best reports, including those submitted by Major-Generals Shafter and Wheeler, Colonel Wood of the Rough Riders, and of a number of others standing high in military authority; and these reports have been supplemented by the countless personal narratives of men who went to the front, saw, suffered, fought, and conquered. The scenes in the state camp, previous to the departure for the South, are largely such as came under the author's own observation.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

NEWARK, N.J.,
November 1, 1898.

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A YOUNG VOLUNTEER IN CUBA

CHAPTER I

BEN REACHES A DETERMINATION

"THEN you have decided, Mr. Snodgrass, that you will not go into business in New York again?"

"That's it, Ben. I have found competition in the hardware trade too keen here, and now that this fire has wiped out the store and its entire contents, I shall wait until I can adjust matters with the insurance companies and then return to Buffalo and open again at the old stand."

"I'm sorry to hear this, sir. It will throw me out of a situation."

"That is true, Ben, and I am sorry too. If you cared to return to Buffalo with me, I would willingly give you an opening there, for you have proved yourself a first-rate clerk since you have been with me. But I suppose you don't care to go back, do you?"

Ben Russell shook his head decidedly, and a some-

what bitter look crossed his frank and manly face. "No, sir, I don't want to get within a hundred miles of Mr. Job Dowling," he answered. "He's the meanest guardian any one ever had, and he treated Larry, Walter and me most shamefully, as you know. If I went back, he would compel me to live with him and that awful Irishwoman, Mrs. Rafferty, whose cooking wasn't fit for a dog to eat, and I don't know but that he might have me arrested for running away."

"Your guardian is certainly a peculiar man,—very miserly, if I may use the term. Didn't you tell me that there is a matter of fifteen thousand dollars in the bank coming to you three boys?"

"Yes; Uncle Job has it safely invested. But he thinks money is only to save, not to spend. He would live on a dry crust rather than break a dollar bill to buy a loaf of bread."

"Then his Irish housekeeper can't be altogether to blame for the cooking," smiled Richard Snodgrass. "But it is a shame to grind you and your two brothers down in this fashion, when your mother left you so well off. I don't know but that you might apply to the court for relief."

"I've been thinking of that; but Larry, Walter,

and I are separated now, and it would cause a lot of trouble. I would just as lief make my own way until we are all of age."

"Have you written to your guardian lately?"

"I wrote two weeks ago, telling him I was doing fairly well, and adding that if he wished to write to me he could address the letter to the general post-office; for I don't want him to find out just where I am. I haven't as yet received any reply."

"Probably he won't answer. By the way, how are your two brothers getting on?"

"Walter is in Boston, helping to tend a large news stand near one of the principal hotels. Larry drifted to San Francisco and from there to Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands, and the last letter I received from him stated that he was going on a cruise to Hong Kong, China."

"Larry is a rover and no mistake. Evidently he takes to the water."

"Oh, he does. He was always out on the lake at home, along with Walter. I dare say he won't come back until he has been completely around the world."

"It's a wonder to me you boys did not stick together when you decided to leave home."

"We hadn't any time to make plans, everything was done in such a rush. Walter and I did stick together until we got to Middletown, but then Walter boarded a train and I couldn't make it, and I remained behind, to work four days in an auction store. When I reached New York I was pretty well used up, and if it hadn't been for you—"

"Yes, yes, Ben, I know the rest. But you have deserved all the help I have given you. If you are bound to remain in New York, I will give you the best of recommendations, and try to find some opening, too, before I leave. You— What is it, Pennington?"

Richard Snodgrass broke off short, as a young man of twenty-four came up and touched him on the shoulder. The young man had dark hair, dark eyes, and a round, ruddy face, and was evidently of Southern blood.

"I was going to inquire about the prospects for work," said Gilbert Pennington, anxiously. "You know I can't afford to remain idle long, Mr. Snodgrass. A needy bookkeeper like myself must keep right on laboring, fire or no fire."

"Ben here was asking the same question, Pen-

nington, and I can only answer you as I answered him. I am going to close up entirely in New York and go back to my old home in Buffalo."

"Then the business won't be taken up, even by other parties?"

"No; the store to be built has already been leased to a dry goods firm from across the way."

"Then I am out of it. It's rather rough, in these times."

"Have you looked elsewhere, as I suggested?"

"Yes, I have made a dozen inquiries. But trade is dull, and this trouble with Spain has made it worse, and no one wants any extra help."

"Well, I'm sorry for both of you," was all Richard Snodgrass could say; and then he walked away, to attend to a dozen matters relative to the great conflagration which had laid his store and several others in the block in ruins.

"Well, Gilbert, we're out of it," remarked Ben Russell, when he and the bookkeeper were left alone. "I must admit I don't know what to do next."

The young Southerner took off his hat, ran his fingers through his curly hair, and shook his head. "Yes, we're out of it, and there is no telling when we'll be in it again," he returned with a sorry little

laugh. "When I struck Mr. Snodgrass' place four months ago, I fancied myself in clover, and here I am, in a strange city, with no friend but yourself, and with only seventeen dollars in my pocket."

"You are exactly a dollar ahead of me," smiled Ben. "Fortunately, my board is paid for a whole week in advance."

"And mine is just about due — so we are nearly equal." Gilbert Pennington smiled grimly. "I'm afraid we're going to have a tough time of it," he added in a lower voice. "I didn't want to speak to Snodgrass about it, but I've put two advertisements for a situation in the papers without a single reply, and I answered sixteen advertisements, with no better results."

"And I answered eight advertisements and called at six business places that wanted help, without a smell of an opening. I'm afraid I'll have to start up some business of my own," concluded Ben.

"A business of your own? What do you mean?"

"Why, buy goods and sell them, on the streets or from house to house. I'd rather do that than starve. This war scare has caused a good demand for pictures of the battleship *Maine* that was blown up in Havana harbor. I've found out where the

pictures can be bought down town for four dollars a hundred, and they sell for ten cents each. If a fellow could sell a hundred a day, he would clear six dollars."

Gilbert Pennington drew himself up. "I couldn't lower myself to such work," he said coldly. "I'll leave that to the Bowery rag-tags."

"It wouldn't be very pleasant, but it's honest enough, Gilbert. I believe in pitching in, if not at one thing then at another. It's better than holding your hands and waiting."

"Oh, you've got lots of Yankee push, I can see that plainly enough," was the laughing answer. "We Southerners are more reserved, you know. Where are you bound for now?"

"I'm going down to the general post-office, to see if there is any letter from that guardian of mine. After that I don't know what I'll do. Will you come along?"

"I don't know but that it would be just as well. When we are down there we can take a look at the newspaper bulletin boards along Park Row. It amused me to watch the crowd devouring every scrap of so-called war news."

"That shows how interested all Americans are in

this affair between Cuba, Spain and ourselves. It seems to me matters look mighty serious since that Court of Inquiry decided that the *Maine* was blown up from the outside."

"Do you really imagine there will be war?" went on Gilbert Pennington, as the pair started off on a brisk walk down Broadway. "Why, the United States wouldn't dare to go to war, for fear the Continental powers would interfere."

"We would dare do anything, if we felt we were in the right. But I think Spain will see where she has done wrong and will try to set matters straight. One thing is certain: Cuba ought to be free."

"Oh, I agree with you there. Spanish cruelty in that ill-fated island has been beyond all endurance."

"I suppose Spain has President McKinley's ultimatum by this time. There ought to be some news about how it was received. I rather guess Minister Woodford will have his hands full getting a satisfactory answer to it."

"If there is war, it will upset things in the city completely, Ben."

"More than likely — although some things will boom, as for instance, the making of firearms, of

powder, of soldiers' clothing, and the supplying of provisions, wagons and horses. A war would be a tremendous undertaking. I don't wonder that those at the head of the government are inclined to move slowly, in spite of the slurs cast at them by some of the hot-headed newspapers. It's a great responsibility."

"Yes, and think of the lives that might be lost," returned Gilbert, as the two friends reached the upper end of City Hall Park and turned towards what is familiarly called Newspaper Row. "By Jove! what a crowd of people around the bulletin boards! I wonder if any extra news has been received."

"We'll go over—I can go into the post-office later," cried Ben, even more anxious than his friend. "Hear, some of them are shouting. There goes a new bulletin up. Gracious me, what's that? 'Our Fleet Sails for Havana!!! The Warships at Key West Have Left for Cuba!! Troops Will Act with the Navy as soon as the Army can be Concentrated! A Call for Volunteers Likely!' If that doesn't mean war, then I don't know anything. Come on, Gilbert, let us get where we can read the details." And away rushed Ben into the midst of the surging

and shouting mass of people with his friend at his heels. Soon both were in a position to see all there was displayed, the several bulletins running somewhat after this fashion: —

Diplomatic negotiations between this country and Spain are at an end. The Spanish minister at Washington has taken his passports. Our own minister at Madrid will return home at once. Spain will not even answer our ultimatum.

Nearly all of the warships lying at Key West have secretly sailed for Havana or other points in Cuba. The whereabouts of the Flying Squadron under Commodore Schley is at present unknown, but it is thought the squadron is lying in wait for any Spanish fleet which may be on its way to our shores.

The regular army will probably concentrate at some point in Florida. A call on the various states for volunteers may come at any moment. Governors of many states are holding themselves in readiness to supply any demands made upon them for soldiers. The navy is recruiting with all possible speed. A clash of arms is inevitable.

A great deal more followed, in a similar strain, telling of what was thought of the situation in Madrid and what Congress proposed to do. Ben read every word with intense interest, the crowd mean-

while pushing him hither and thither and shouting itself hoarse.

"Hurrah for Uncle Sam! Now we'll show the Dons what we can do!" came from the lusty throat of a workman who carried his dinner pail upon his arm. "If they want me for a soldier, they can have me."

"And they can have me, too," put in a dapper clerk who stood beside the workman. "We're all brothers in this thing, eh?" he added; and the crowd gave a shout of approval.

"I fought in the Civil War," broke in a man standing by, dressed in a Grand Army suit, "and I can fight again. Hurrah for Old Glory!" and the cheers were given with a will, Ben joining in as loudly as any one. Then of a sudden the youth turned to his friend.

"Gilbert, I know what I'm going to do if the President calls for volunteers," he said. "I'm going to enlist."

CHAPTER II

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

As has been intimated, Ben Russell was an orphan, who, at the untimely death of his beloved widowed mother, had been left, in company with his two younger brothers, Walter and Larry, to the care of a step-uncle, Job Dowling. Ben was nearly nineteen years of age, tall, well-built, and with a make-up that was thoroughly manly.

In a previous work in this series, entitled "Under Dewey at Manila," I related how the three boys had found life under their guardian's roof unbearable, and how, after numerous quarrels, each had fled to seek fortune as he might find it, — Ben drifting to New York; Walter, the next oldest, going to Boston; and Larry, a lad of sixteen, travelling first to San Francisco, then shipping to Honolulu, and from there to Hong Kong. On the latter trip Larry was cast overboard, to be picked up later on by the Asiatic Squadron of the United States

Navy, under Commodore Dewey, and to become a participant in one of the greatest naval battles of modern history.

When Ben reached New York, as he had written to Larry in a letter received at Honolulu by that young sailor, he had tramped around for three days looking for employment, but without success. He was at his wit's end as to what to do, when, on walking along Broadway, he chanced to fall in with Mr. Snodgrass, who had several years before conducted a hardware business in Buffalo, the youth's native place. Ben knew the merchant fairly well; a lengthy conversation ensued, and the youth had been engaged as a clerk in Mr. Snodgrass' establishment on Canal Street, at a salary of six dollars per week.

At the hardware store Ben became intimate with Gilbert Pennington, the bookkeeper. Gilbert was from Richmond, Virginia, and was without a relative and scarcely a friend. The young man had secured a room for Ben at his own boarding-house up in Harlem, and soon the pair were as intimate as brothers.

For a short while matters had run along very well; and during this time Ben sent several letters

to Walter and Larry. Then, urged by Gilbert, he wrote to his guardian, stating that he was doing fairly well, and that Mr. Dowling need not worry about him. "Not that I think he will worry," he said, "but he ought to know that I am still in the land of the living." Although he did not say so, he awaited his step-uncle's reply with much interest. Would the man storm and threaten, would he try coaxing, or would he prove indifferent to the stand the boys had assumed?

Wide-awake, and with a strong desire to visit the various points of interest in and about New York, Ben was already planning how best to spend his summer half-holidays, when a fierce fire, starting in a chemical warehouse adjoining Mr. Snodgrass' store, laid half the square in ruins, and threw every one connected with the business out of employment. The fire had raged at night, and it was not until the following morning, when they came down on the elevated train to go to work, that Ben and his friend learned of the condition of affairs.

For several days all had been in confusion, and during that time Ben had done what little he could towards straightening out several minor matters connected with the concern. In the meanwhile it

was whispered about that Mr. Snodgrass would not resume, and the youth and Pennington began looking around elsewhere for work. But as the young Southerner had said, the cloud of war which was showing itself on the horizon of our country, depressed still further an already dull state of trade, and no opening was to be found.

Ben Russell was patriotic to the core, and from the very start had taken a deep interest in the struggles of the people of Cuba to throw off the yoke of Spanish tyranny and oppression. Like many others he believed that the United States should send food to the thousands who were starving in the war-torn island, regardless of the fact that Spain might consider this an act to aid the rebels, or insurgents. "To let the helpless women, children and old men starve just because the others are waging a war for liberty is barbarous," he said to Gilbert. "I don't believe President McKinley, Congress, or anybody else will stand it. Spain has been trying for three years now to quell the rebellion, and the best thing she can do is to let up on Cuba and allow the people there to govern themselves."

"It's a great state of affairs down there," was

the answer of the young man, who, it may as well be stated here, had spent a year of his life in Havana and in Santiago de Cuba previous to trying his fortunes in New York. "Why, a Chinaman would never stand being taxed as the Cubans are taxed. And the worst of it is that every officer of the government is somebody sent to Cuba from Spain. Even the judges are Spanish, and when a dispute arises between a Cuban and a Spaniard, and the case is taken into court, the Spaniard, of course, gets the better of it."

In one of his letters to his brother Larry, Ben had mentioned that if the trouble with Spain should lead to war he would probably drop his position and turn soldier. This line had been somewhat thoughtlessly written, yet as the youth remembered it afterward he did not feel inclined to reverse his opinion. An earnest reader, he had perused many historical works pertaining to the War of the Revolution, to 1812, to the conflict with Mexico, and to the great rebellion, as well as biographies relating the daring deeds of Washington, La Fayette, Scott, Grant, Lee, and a score of other heroes, and more than once he had pictured himself as a boy in blue, struggling for fame upon the battlefield.

This picture was always highly colored; he was yet to learn that war is a grim thing, far from rosy.

"You're going to enlist?" queried Gilbert Pennington, as Ben repeated his declaration.

"Yes, I'm going to enlist — if Uncle Sam requires my services."

"Good for you, my boy!" put in the Grand Army man standing near. "I was just about your age when I enlisted under General McClellan and fought on the Peninsula with him, and under Grant in Virginia, too. Do you see that scar?" — throwing back the sleeve of his coat and pointing to his wrist. "I got that at Malvern Hill, when the rebels made their last attack. It was a hot time, but we beat them back, and got away in safety. I'll go to Cuba too, if I'm not too old for the service, and I reckon a lot of those Confederates we fought against will go too."

"Sure they will!" cried another man standing by. "What's the matter with General Fitzhugh Lee?" And the crowd hurrahed again, for Fitzhugh Lee had done heroic work as the United States Consul at Havana, and this man was closely related to Robert E. Lee, the former Confederate army leader. It was plain to see that sectionalism

was a thing of the past and that in the future north and south, east and west, would stand shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy of the glorious Union.

"I declare, you'll make me feel like enlisting," remarked Gilbert, as he smiled at the enthusiasm over the mentioning of the name of Lee — a name dear to every Southern heart.

"And why shouldn't you enlist, sir?" demanded the Grand Army man, who was gradually gathering a crowd more closely around him by his remarks. "Won't the cause be worthy enough?" And then the crowd shifted, and Ben and Gilbert found themselves shoved upon the outskirts, close to the City Hall.

"I think they could get five thousand volunteers here in five minutes if they wanted them," observed Ben. "If the Spaniards could see this scene, perhaps they would be more careful of what they are doing."

"I dare say you will find just as much enthusiasm in Madrid, Ben. Spaniards are as loyal to their mother country as we are to the States."

"But they ought to know they cannot fight successfully against such a country as this."

"The common people are kept in ignorance of

the true condition of affairs. There is not a free press as there is here. Editors are allowed to print only that which has passed the press censor. Perhaps those in authority would like to grant the United States their demands, but they do not dare, for fear the common people will revolt and overthrow them. The peasantry of Spain know only that which has been told to them, — only a small proportion of them can read and write, — and they believe their country to be still one of the most powerful of nations. If their queen should give in to us, they would cry out that they had been betrayed."

"I wonder where our warships are going and what they will do?"

"For the present I believe they will merely blockade Havana and other ports. It would do no good to bombard Havana without an army of invasion to complete a conquest, for General Blanco is stationed in the city with a large portion of the Spanish army. I take it a blockade will be maintained until the army can be placed on a war footing, as soldiers put it."

"I declare, Gilbert, you ought to be a soldier; you talk as if you knew something of the business."

The young Southerner blushed. "I did think very seriously once of going into the army, Ben, and I read up accordingly. But I went into trade instead, and knocked around Richmond and Atlanta, and then went over to Jamaica, Santiago de Cuba, Havana, and finally came to New York."

"You've seen a good bit of the world," was Ben's comment, as he led the way through the park to the post-office building. "You must know a good deal about Havana."

"Not very much, for I remained there only a few weeks. The largest portion of my stay in Cuba was in and around Santiago, where I kept books for an iron company. But Havana, so far as stores and dwellings go, is not much different from Santiago, and the streets are just as narrow and dirty."

"I've been told they have summer there all the year around."

"That is true, although there is a rainy season worse than our winter. On account of the heat, none of the windows have glass in them, but are barred or grated instead to keep out intruders, and all are built with deep casements, so that only a very driving rain can get inside."

"That must look odd."

"One soon gets used to it, just as one gets used to the canvas-bottomed beds and the houses of only two stories, with a garden in the centre of the stone pile, a stable closely connected, and everybody, from the master down to the stable boy and the chicken peddler, using the front door," concluded Gilbert, as the two entered the post-office.

Ben had been down to the general delivery window before, and consequently knew exactly where to go. As it was in the dullest part of the afternoon, the post-office was almost deserted, and he had no difficulty in getting waited on.

"No letter for Benjamin A. Russell," said the clerk, after looking over a box marked *RUS.* "Next!" and Ben turned away disappointed.

"So I have found you at last, young man!" exclaimed a harsh voice close at hand, and a set of long, bony fingers closed over the youth's left arm. Somewhat startled, he looked over his shoulder, to find himself confronted by his guardian and step-uncle, Job Dowling.

CHAPTER III

JOB DOWLING SPEAKS HIS MIND

"UNCLE JOB!"

"Exactly, Ben. I reckon ye didn't figure on seein' me jest yet, did ye?"

"I — I did not," stammered the youth. "Let go of my arm," he continued, as Job Dowling's bony fingers sank deeper into the flesh.

"I ain't a-goin' to let go, Ben, and have you a-runnin' away. You ran away once — ye shan't do it ag'in, I'll warrant ye that!"

Mr. Job Dowling was a man of sixty, tall, and with a large set of bones, which were covered with little more than shrivelled-up, yellowish-brown skin. He wore a tangled, reddish beard, and his hair, of the same color, hung down over a low, wrinkled forehead, beneath which gleamed a pair of what Walter Russell had aptly termed "toad's eyes." He wore a rusty suit of black, the same that had been his best for twenty odd years, and in one

hand he carried a much dilapidated oilcloth travelling-bag.

"I suppose you would like to know how I spotted ye," went on the guardian, cooling down a bit, now the first excitement of his capture was over. "It was your letter done it — you said to write to the general delivery, so I knowed you would come here to git it."

"Did you come all the way to New York just to find me?" asked Ben, astonished to think his step-uncle would pay out such a large amount for car fare.

"O' course I didn't!" snapped Job Dowling. "I ain't a-payin' no sech railroad fare jest to catch a boy who is wild-minded enough to run away from a good home. I had other business in New York, otherwise I shouldn't 'a' come. Now supposin' you give an account o' yourself," and Job Dowling began to drag Ben into an out-of-the-way corner, while Gilbert followed, viewing the scene in curiosity and concern, for Ben had told him a good deal about his troubles with the miserly man.

"I haven't much to mention, Uncle Job," replied the youth, as steadily as he could, although being taken so completely by surprise had made him ner-

vous. "I couldn't stand it any longer at your place, and so I ran away, and came to New York, as I wrote in the letter."

"And what are you a-doin' now? Loafin' about the town and goin' to destruction jest as fast as ye can, I'll warrant."

"I am not going to destruction. Up to a few days ago I had a steady situation in a hardware store owned by Mr. Snodgrass — the man who used to have a store in Buffalo. You must remember him."

At this announcement Job Dowling's face took on a sour look. "So it was Snodgrass put it in your head to set yourself up against me, was it?" he grumbled. "I allers set him down as bein' an unfair man."

"Mr. Snodgrass is as fair and square a man as there ever was!" burst from the youth's lips. "He's been the best friend I could have; he's been better to me than you ever dared — "

"Tut, tut, boy, don't go for to talk back to me — I won't have it. I know what is best for ye — know it better nor Snodgrass or yourself. The city ain't no place for ye — with its wicked ways." Job Dowling paused. "You said ye worked for him up

to a few days ago. Why did ye leave him, and what have ye been a doin' since?"

"His place of business was burned out, and he has decided not to resume."

"And ye ain't workin' now?"

"No, I'm looking around for another place."

"Humph! How much did Snodgrass pay ye?"

"Six dollars a week."

"Six dollars! The man mustn't know what to do with his money. How much have ye saved of it?"

"I have sixteen dollars on hand."

"Is that all? You ought to have more — if ye worked for him any considerable time."

"I had to pay four dollars a week for board."

"What! four dollars a week! Board fer a lad like you ain't wuth more'n two dollars and a half, or three dollars at the most. You've been swindled — but it ain't to be wondered at. You can be thankful some sharper didn't git the sixteen dollars away from ye. Better turn it over to me for safe keepin'." And Job Dowling dropped his travelling-bag and held out his hand.

Ben's lips closed tightly and he shook his head. "I'll keep my money, Uncle Job. I think it will be as safe in my pocket as in yours."

"No, it won't be, Ben. Besides, I'm your guardian; remember that; and I have the say over all you have until you're twenty-one. Hand the money over," and Job Dowling now caught his nephew by both arms.

"I'm going to keep the money, and I'm going to take care of myself!" burst out Ben, half desperately. "When Walter and Larry and I lived with you, you treated us worse than dogs, and you forced us to run away. Now I am going to take care of myself until I am twenty-one, and then I'm going to call you to account. If you — "

"You — you rascal!" broke out Job Dowling. "Not another word, or I'll be tempted to strike ye where ye stand! To talk in this fashion to your lawfully appointed guardian! It's an — an outrage! But it only shows your naterally wicked disposition. You come along with me, and I'll show ye a thing or two afore I have done with ye; mark the words!"

"Where do you want me to go to?"

"Never you mind — you come along."

"I shall not go a step, Uncle Job. I told you I was going to take care of myself, and I mean it."

The eyes of the man blazed with inward wrath.

"You will go! If ye don't, I'll call a policeman and have ye locked up. It's a pretty state o' things when a lawfully appointed guardian can't make sech a boy as you mind. If you don't — hullo, he's gone! Stop him! stop him! He's my nephew, and I'm his lawfully appointed guardian! I'll give a — a — ten cents to any one who stops him!"

For, without warning, Ben had suddenly wrenched himself from his guardian's grasp, and sped for one of the post-office doorways leading upon Broadway. Gilbert followed him, but came to a halt as the opening was gained.

"Hi! git out of my way!" cried Job Dowling, as he found the passage-way blocked by the young Southerner's form. "Git out of my way!"

"What is that?" demanded Gilbert, coolly, and at the same time shifting first to one side and then the other, so that Job Dowling found further progress out of the question.

"I said git out of my way! Can't ye understand English?" was the wrathy return. "That's my nephew tryin' to git away from me — and I'm his lawfully appointed guardian."

"I don't blame him from trying to get away from such an ungracious individual," said Gilbert, and

then he passed out upon the street, having delayed the chase as he had intended, without Job Dowling suspecting his motive.

The moment allowed to Ben had been enough; and when Job Dowling reached the sidewalk the youth was nowhere to be seen in the crowd which was moving up and down the metropolis' main thoroughfare. With a crestfallen face the guardian moved from one end of the post-office to the other, peered across the street through the maze of trucks, carriages and cable cars, and then came to a halt where Gilbert had taken his stand, not far from the corner.

"He's got away — and all through your fault," he snarled. "I ought to hold you responsible for this."

"My dear sir, you seem to be very much excited over what has happened," answered Gilbert, who was not above getting some amusement out of the old miser.

"I've got a right to get excited. That boy ran away from Buffalo, — him and his two brothers," was the answer, with a total disregard for grammar. "He's a wild one. If I don't catch him, he'll go to destruction. He's got sixteen dollars in his pocket,

and he'll fritter it away, or have it stolen on him, and — gracious me! My valise!"

And away in wild haste went Job Dowling for the post-office entrance. He had just remembered the oilcloth travelling-bag, which, in the excitement, he had forgotten. "Supposin' it's gone!" he groaned to himself. And then he turned deadly white. The bag *was* gone. Not a sight of it was to be seen anywhere. He wrung his hands in despair.

"I've been robbed! robbed!" he moaned. "And the bag contained my second best suit, and my underclothes, and that bag o' jewelry I calkerlated to sell! Where is the thief? Oh, if only I can lay hands on him!"

Seeing the old man was much disturbed, a post-office policeman stepped up and asked what was the matter, and into the ears of this officer Job Dowling told his tale of woe. A search was instantly instituted, but it was of no avail. The bag was not brought to light, nor could any one be found who had seen it being taken away.

In the meanwhile what of Ben? Darting out of the post-office just ahead of Gilbert, the youth had not hesitated to plunge directly into the crowded

street, feeling that it was the one way where his guardian would not follow him. A few weeks in the metropolis had caused the youth to feel perfectly at home there, and he cut across diagonally, as sure of foot as the ragged urchins with their armfuls of newspapers, landing, on the opposite side, at the lower corner of the Astor House. Without waiting here, he darted down Vesey Street to the neighborhood of the North River.

"My, but that was a narrow escape!" he murmured, as he ceased running after several blocks had been covered. "I'll not go back to Buffalo with him, not if I know it." And he turned along the river front in the direction of up town, thus giving the neighborhood of the general post-office a wide berth.

He wondered if Gilbert had stopped to talk to his guardian, and if so, what his friend would have to say to the miserly man. "I hope he doesn't give Uncle Job my boarding-house address," he mused. "Perhaps I had better take my traps out of that place as soon as I can."

The more Ben thought of this, the more did it look like a good move to make; and soon he was in an elevated train on his way to Harlem. He made

one change; and this brought him within two blocks of what was his New York home, a modest brick dwelling, presided over by Mrs. Gibson, a motherly widow.

It did not take him long to pack up his few belongings; and this accomplished, he sought out his landlady, who was helping the cook prepare dinner, for it was now nearly six o'clock.

"I am going away for the present, Mrs. Gibson," he began, when he heard the front door open, and Gilbert enter. Making sure his friend was alone, he ran up to meet him. Gilbert at once assured him that he had told his guardian nothing of importance.

"He ran back into the post-office for his grip, and then I came away," concluded the young Southerner. "You may as well stay here as anywhere. He will find hunting for you as bad as hunting for the proverbial pin in a haystack. But coming up on the train, something crossed my mind which won't be pleasant news to you."

"What is that, Gilbert?"

"It is this, Ben. You spoke about enlisting for the war if there is a call for volunteers. As you are under age, do you know you cannot enlist without your guardian's consent?"

Ben's face dropped, and a pang shot through his heart. On his way to the boarding-house he had pictured to himself his enlistment in the army as a way out of all of his present difficulties. Were his bright plans for the future to fall to the ground, after all?

CHAPTER IV

THE DRILLING AT THE ARMORY

"I CAN'T enlist without my guardian's consent," repeated Ben, slowly. "Then I fancy I am booked to stay home. Uncle Job will never give in, even if I am foolish enough to ask him."

"Well, it may be the means of saving you from untold hardships," responded Gilbert, who was inclined to view the matter lightly. "Remember what I have often said, if this war really comes, it will be no holiday-making. Spain has a large standing army, even if her resources are not as great as those of the United States; and she will go in for making a brave showing when the first shot is fired."

"I don't care. I am willing to take the risk, Gilbert. Somebody has got to go to the front, and why not fellows like me, who have no one depending upon them? I think it's a shame that I must stand back for such a — a miserable skinflint as my Uncle Job. You can wager all you're worth *he* wouldn't

risk his life, even if the whole country was in danger," continued Ben, bitterly.

"I believe you, my boy; he is disagreeable and hide-bound to the last degree. If he was my guardian, I would bring him to terms, even if I had to go to every court in the land. He is not fit to be the guardian of anybody."

Ben bit his lip, and began to pace the sitting-room floor. "Mr. Snodgrass said he would aid me in a move against Mr. Dowling, if I accompanied him to Buffalo. If I ever do have to go back, I'll ask Mr. Snodgrass to keep his word. I won't live with Uncle Job, and that's flat!" And he clenched his fists.

Dinner was soon served; but Ben had lost his appetite, and scarcely touched a mouthful. He was wondering what he had best do next. The news on the bulletin boards had put it into his head to wait a few days and see if volunteers were really wanted; but what was the use now of waiting, if his guardian stood between him and an enlistment?

"It's too mean for anything!" he muttered, as he proceeded to his room. "I don't believe any fellow ever ran up against such luck as I'm having."

"Supposing we take a walk out, and learn if

there is anything new from Washington," suggested Gilbert. "It won't do you any good to mope over what has happened, Ben. 'Beneath the clouds the sun's still shining,' is what I tell myself when I feel blue. Come on; a brisk walk will do you good."

And he almost dragged the boy downstairs. Once in the street they set off for the avenue upon which was located the branch office of a leading morning newspaper.

Here another crowd was collected, not as large as that in Park Row, but just as enthusiastic. The war news was being displayed upon a huge square of canvas by means of a stereopticon. The first lines which greeted Ben's eyes ran as follows: —

A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

It has been decided by the President and the committee of Congress that not less than 125,000 volunteers shall be called out without delay. Each state and territory will be called on to furnish its quota according to population. Governor Black is already preparing to issue the necessary orders to the National Guard of this state.

NO FORMAL DECLARATION OF WAR TO BE MADE!

The Cabinet has decided that no declaration of war is now necessary. A manifesto to all foreign powers

may be issued. The navy will blockade Havana and await the coöperation of the army. Regulars will be massed in Florida without delay, to be joined there by the volunteers.

ROOSEVELT TO THE FRONT!

Our own "Teddy" Roosevelt has signified his intention of organizing a body of cavalry, to be known as Roosevelt's Rough Riders, to be composed of all the famous Western men who are his friends. The cavalry will be equipped without expense to the government. William Astor will offer a battery to the President, and Helen Gould will donate money with which to equip a regiment.

The news was being furnished piecemeal, and cheer after cheer went up as people, well known locally, were mentioned. "Hurrah for Governor Black! He won't be behind with his boys in blue!" "Let's give one for brave Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders!" "What's the matter with William Astor and Miss Gould? They're all right!" And so the cries ran on.

"A troop of Rough Riders!" remarked Gilbert. "Now there is something that would just suit me. I can ride very well, and if they would have me, why, hang me, but I'd enlist," and the young South-

erner gave a vigorous nod of his head. "Who is this Teddy Roosevelt?"

"He is at present Assistant Secretary of the Navy, but is well known as a New Yorker who is out for reform."

"No wonder he is popular, then."

"I don't know that I should care to become a cavalryman," went on Ben. "Being a foot-soldier would suit me well enough. But from the despatches it looks as if the volunteers were to be taken only from the militia."

"I fancy there will be room for all who desire to enlist. Come, let us go down to the bulletin boards two blocks below here. I declare, I'm getting as much interested in this war news as yourself."

Gilbert led the way out of the dense mass of people and started to cross the street. It was dark away from the bulletin boards, and, in a moment, Ben and his friend became separated. Not knowing which way to turn, the youth came to a halt in the middle of the street.

Clang! clang! clang! It was the gong of an ambulance which was clattering down the avenue at top speed. "Clear the way there, or you'll be run down!" came the warning, and helter-skelter

went the crowd for the nearest sidewalk. Ben turned with the others, but paused as a cry of distress reached his ears.

"Save me! Help!" It was the voice of a man of middle age. He had slipped on the car tracks and lay flat on his back, with the ambulance bearing down upon him, the horses almost beyond the control of the driver.

"He'll be run over!" yelled some one, and several women began to shriek. "Whoa! whoa!" commanded the ambulance driver, frantically, but the horses paid no attention, and in a trice the nearest was but two yards away from the prostrate form. Then in a twinkle Ben leaped in, caught the fallen one by the arm, and dragged him back, and the ambulance thundered on, the doctor in the rear gazing out anxiously to see if all had gone well.

"Can you stand, sir?" asked the youth, when the danger was past. His heart had leaped into his throat, and he was breathing heavily.

"I — I think so," was the hazy reply. "When I fell I hit my head, and that dazed me for a minute." The man arose slowly and leaned upon Ben's arm. "Jove! but that was a close shave. The driver of that turnout ought to be arrested for

In a Twinkle Ben leaped in Page 38

such reckless driving through a crowd. He would go to aid one injured person, and kill half a dozen in doing it. Young man, I owe you my thanks."

"Let us get over on the sidewalk; it's safer there, Mr. —"

"My name is Robert Turnbull. I'm a lawyer. And you are —"

"Ben Russell, sir. Perhaps I had better see you home, Mr. Turnbull," went on the youth, as he noticed the lawyer clasp his hand to the back of his head, as if in pain.

"Oh, no; I'll get over it in a minute. So your name is Ben Russell? Well, Russell, I shan't forget you in a hurry. If I can ever be of service to you, command me," and the lawyer brought out his card and passed it over.

A few words more passed, and then, seeing Gilbert standing not far off, Ben parted from his newly made acquaintance, and joined his friend.

"I've been looking everywhere for you," said the young man. "Where did you slip to?"

The youth related what had occurred, to which Gilbert listened with interest. "You're a brave one, and will make a first-rate soldier!" he cried enthusiastically, and clapped Ben on the back.

"Oh, stow it, Gilbert! What's the use of talking, if I can't enlist without Mr. Dowling's consent? Let us go back to our boarding-house. I want to get a good night's sleep and start out bright and early for something to do."

"I was going to suggest we go to the armory below here. I just heard one man tell another the companies were drilling. I should like to see them. I suppose the state militia will brush up, now it is likely to be called out."

"To be sure." Ben's face brightened. "All right, I'll go — we needn't stay very long."

Admission to the big stone building was free, and passing a number of private rooms belonging to the various companies, the pair found their way to the immense drill room, the sides of which were crowded with spectators, for the spirit of war had caught the city from end to end.

Two separate companies were drilling, one going through the manual of arms, and the other exercising in field tactics. For a while they watched the first named as it responded in clock-like movements to the commands, "Present arms!" "Carry arms!" "Shoulder arms!" "Load!" "Take aim!" "Fire!" The click of a hundred Springfield rifles gave Ben

a veritable thrill. "Gracious! supposing the guns were loaded and they were firing at a lot of Spaniards!" he whispered to Gilbert.

"Yes, and supposing you were one of that company and the Spaniards opened fire on you," responded Gilbert, but Ben failed to scare.

"I'd go anyway; you can't frighten me," he said sturdily.

The field tactics were even more interesting. Around and around the hall marched the company, in single rank, double rank, by columns of fours, and in single file. Then the double ranks swung around, the files separated, until each soldier stood several feet from those next to him. "That's a skirmish line," whispered Gilbert. "See, they are going ahead as if they were an advance guard creeping up to the enemy. Down they go!" as each soldier and each officer dropped on his knee. In this position the company went through the act of loading and firing. Then an advance of four yards was made, and suddenly, at the word of command, each man dropped flat on his chest. The dull thud on the floor caused a ripple of laughter, and it must be confessed that some of the soldiers looked rather sheepish.

"Never mind; it's no laughing matter when you are in the field and the enemy is trying to draw a bead on you," observed Gilbert. "I'd rather lie down to shoot the other fellow than stand up to let him shoot me."

In one corner an awkward squad were drilling, — seven young fellows dressed in their ordinary clothes and without guns. The sergeant in charge was having his hands full, making the seven obey the orders to "Line up!" "Mark time!" "Right face!" "Left face!" "Eyes right!" and the like. Ben was all attention, for here was something he could thoroughly understand. Mentally he executed every order as it was given. The awkward squad still hung in his mind as he and Gilbert left the armory.

"I wish I was in that squad," he muttered to himself. "Oh, I must make Uncle Job consent to my enlisting — I simply must!"

CHAPTER V

BEN GAINS A POINT

"A GENTLEMAN to see you, Mr. Russell."

It was the girl that attended to the door of the boarding-house who spoke, just as Ben and Gilbert were finishing their breakfast the next morning.

"A gentleman to see me?" repeated the youth. "Can it be Mr. Snodgrass?"

"More than likely it is Mr. Turnbull, come to reward you," remarked Gilbert, lightly. "It wouldn't be any more than fair for him to do the handsome thing, you know."

"I don't want any reward," answered Ben. His face took on a troubled look. "Perhaps it is my Uncle Job."

"Jove, boy, that's so!" The young Southerner looked at Ben inquiringly. "Shall I go up and find out?"

"I'd be much obliged if you would."

"Certainly," and flinging down the morning paper he had picked up, Gilbert started for the

parlor floor. Ben followed to the hallway and cautiously mounted the stairs after him.

"By creation!" the youth heard, a second later, in the well-known voice of his guardian. "If this hain't jest the man I'm a-lookin' for. You rascal! what did ye do with that valise of mine? Come now, out with it!"

"Your valise?" came from Gilbert, in bewilderment. "I know nothing of your valise, sir."

"Don't ye now? Didn't you keep me a-talkin' outside the post-office buildin' while your confederate walked off with it? That's it, and ye can't make me believe otherwise!" And Job Dowling shook his fist in Gilbert's face.

The young Southerner, naturally hot blooded, flushed, and it was with difficulty that he restrained his temper. "If you weren't such an old man, sir, I would knock you down for your insinuation!" he cried. "I tell the truth when I say I know nothing about your valise."

"I saw you eyein' the valise when I was fust talkin' to my nephew, who boards here, accordin' to what Richard Snodgrass told me," went on Job Dowling, doggedly. "Maybe you're in league with him," he added suddenly.

"If I am, it is not for the purpose of stealing your valise, Mr. Dowling."

"Ain't no tellin'. Where is Ben?"

"You had best seek elsewhere for information."

"I won't do it. I'm goin' to find Ben, and I'm goin' to find that valise," stormed the old man. "If ye won't tell me where Ben is, ye can walk down to the station house with me and explain 'bout that valise, and that's all there is to it."

That Mr. Job Dowling was in a "state of mind" was easy to see. The running away of Ben and the loss of his property had completely upset his mental equilibrium, and he was ready to do almost anything in order to "bring somebody to account."

"Did your valise contain much of value?" asked Gilbert, in as gentle a tone as he could command.

"Did it? I rather guess it did — my second best suit, and my underclothing, besides a bag of jewelry I was going to sell —" Job Dowling broke off short.

"A bag of jewelry, Uncle Job?" The question came from the doorway, and Ben entered the room.

"Ha! here ye are, you young good-fer-nothin'!"

ejaculated the guardian, striding forward and facing his nephew. "I was afraid Snodgrass had played me a trick, but I see he didn't."

"Did Mr. Snodgrass give you my address?"

"O' course he did, — but not till I told him I wanted to see you very partickler-like for your own good, he! he!" Job Dowling snickered. "And it is for your own good, boy, 'though you don't seem to know it. You shan't git away from me again, I'll warrant ye!"

"You just said something about a bag of jewelry you had had in your valise, Uncle Job. "Was it the — the jewelry mother left to Walter, Larry, and me?" Ben's voice faltered in spite of his effort to control it.

"That ain't none o' your business," was Job Dowling's answer, but the flush on his wrinkled face told that Ben had struck the truth.

"It is my business. You sold off all the other things, against our wishes, but you know it was mother's particular wish that father's watch, the two wedding rings, and grandfather's Australian diamond should not be disposed of. You wanted to sell them before, but I stopped you. Now, if those things were in that bag and they were stolen,

I shall hold you accountable for them. I have a friend here, a lawyer, Mr. Turnbull, who — "

"Will ye?" Job Dowling's voice trembled and he turned from red to white, as rage gave way to fear. "I ain't accountable to you for what I do."

"I think you are. Anyway, I'm going to court and find out. Do you think you are just the proper guardian for three boys like Walter, Larry, and me to have? I don't. You came to New York to sell off our family heirlooms, which you had no right to do. When you found me you wanted me to give up the money I had earned, for fear I would have it stolen from me, — yet within the same hour you dropped your valise and let somebody run off with it, and with part of my property. And that isn't all," continued Ben, warming up; "you follow me to my boarding-house and grossly insult my best friend here, Mr. Gilbert Pennington. And all this on top of the fact that you've been treating your three nephews like so many dogs, as a dozen folks in Buffalo can testify."

"Why, you — you — " Job Dowling was absolutely speechless.

"Please hear me out, Uncle Job. I ran away, and so did Walter and Larry, because we couldn't

stand it any longer to be under the same roof with you. I came to New York to earn my own living, and I've been doing it, honestly, too — and not loafing about town, as you sneeringly said. I am nearly nineteen and able to take care of myself. Now if you —"

"You ain't able to take care of yourself," snarled the guardian. "If I let you have your own way —"

"You had better hear me out, Uncle Job. From what you have said I infer you mean to make me go back to Buffalo with you."

"Thet's it, and —"

"Hold on. Do you know what I shall do if compelled to go back to Buffalo? I shall apply to the court to have another guardian appointed, and I shall bring so many witnesses to testify to your beggarly way of living and your miserly habits, not to speak of the mismanagement of our estate, that the town will become too hot to hold you."

"You — you miserable —"

"No more compliments, please; I mean just what I say. All our friends in Buffalo know how we boys used to live before mother died, and they know how you wanted us to live afterwards, even though we had thousands of dollars coming to us —"

"I don't stand for wastin' money —"

"No, you stand for hoarding it up, as if it was more precious than your own soul."

"My conscience is clear, boy; I can go to court and prove that I have done right, accordin' to law. Your money is in the bank, and —"

"But what of the jewelry, and that watch? You know that stuff was not to be sold."

"'Twasn't in your maw's will thet way."

"No, it wasn't, but mother told us, and said she told you, and Mrs. Klein, next door, heard her speak of it. If I have to go to court, I'll bring in Mrs. Klein as a witness, and I'll show how the first row we ever had was over the heirlooms you sold which should have remained in the family. Where did you lose your valise?" went on Ben, with a sudden change of subject.

"Down in the post-office, when I went after you."

"Did you go back for it?"

"O' course I did, but I couldn't find hide nor hair of it, nor could the policemen neither." Job Dowling clasped and unclasped his bony hands nervously. "Ben, it 'pears to me things have come to a high pass."

"They have, and on your account, not mine."

"I'm tryin' to do my best by you. I don't like to have ye away where I can't keep my eye on ye. I've got to do my duty as a guardian."

"As I said before, I'm able to take care of myself."

"Yes, Ben is smart and can get along first rate," put in Gilbert, who had dropped into an easy-chair, an interested listener to the "war of words." "You cannot do better, Mr. Dowling, than let him go his own way."

"I ain't askin' advice from you," snarled the miser. He blinked his eyes in perplexity and ran his long fingers through his matted hair. "If I consent to your remainin' in New York, what will ye do, now Snodgrass has busted up?" he continued, to Ben, in a more tractable tone.

Ben's heart gave a bound of joy. He had made an impression upon his guardian at last, and it was with difficulty that he concealed his satisfaction.

"I think I can find some other opening," he answered cautiously.

"It ain't likely — this war comin' on will knock everything flat."

"It won't be duller here than in Buffalo. I might go into the army, Uncle Job."

The old man gave a sniff. "Into the army? Are ye crazy! They don't take boys."

"They will take anybody over eighteen or under thirty-five."

"Pooh! a fine sodger you would make! You'd run at the fust sight of a Spaniard."

"Would you run, Uncle Job?"

"Me? I'm too old to be drafted, thank goodness! No, I wouldn't run, but I ain't got no use for war anyhow. They wanted me to jine in the Civil War, but I was lucky enough to draw a blank each time that the draft came."

"I don't believe there will be any great amount of fighting," went on the youth, carefully feeling his way. "And they pay soldiers from thirteen to eighteen dollars per month and found."

At the mention of wages Job Dowling's eyes glistened. As my readers must know by this time, nothing was dearer to his heart than money. "Eighteen dollars and found is a tidy sum, Ben. What would ye do with it — pervidin' ye jined the army?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do!" cried the boy, earnestly. "If you'll let me join the volunteers, I'll promise to send you half of what I get every time

I'm paid off. And what is more," he continued, pointedly, "I'll let this matter of going to court drop."

"But if ye git shot?"

"That will be my risk, not yours. Come, what do you say? I want to join the volunteers, and my being in the army will save you a lot of trouble, and besides, you'll make money by it. Can I go?"

"I dunno but what you kin — if you're so set on it," answered Job Dowling, as he dropped heavily into a chair. "But, remember, if them Spaniards kill ye, it's your funeral, not mine."

CHAPTER VI

SOMETHING ABOUT AFFAIRS IN CUBA

"HURRAH, Gilbert! That was easier than I thought it would be! Now I can join the army just as soon as they will take me!" and in the exuberance of high spirits Ben actually began to dance a jig on the floor of the boarding-house bedroom.

It was nearly noon, and Job Dowling had just left, to visit the police headquarters, hoping to find some news of the missing travelling-bag. He had admitted to Ben that the bag of jewelry had contained, among other things, the wedding rings previously mentioned, also the watch, and had promised that if they were recovered he would take them back to Buffalo and turn them over to his bank for safe keeping until the Russell estate was settled up.

"My, but you talked to him like a Dutch uncle!" was the young Southerner's comment. "I don't wonder he gave in to you. I believe he was afraid,

if the jewelry wasn't recovered, you would have him arrested."

"I must apologize for the manner in which he treated you, Gilbert. It wasn't fair. But — but — you saw for yourself what manner of man he is."

"Don't say a word, my boy; he's a — a terror. I wouldn't live with him a single day," was Gilbert's comment. "I can't understand how you three boys stood it as long as you did. Well, you are free to do as you please now, with that written consent in your pocket. It's a good thing you got him to sign it before he had a chance to cool off and think it over, and that you mentioned Mr. Turnbull, the lawyer."

"I knew I would have to take him on the jump." Ben drew a long breath. "I only hope he gets his valise back, with the contents."

"There is small chance of that in such a city as this. More than likely the thief has thrown the bag and clothing away and pawned the jewelry. If your uncle can describe the jewelry, the police will try to hunt the stuff up in the pawnshops."

"The wedding rings belonged to my father and mother, and the watch was father's," went on Ben, soberly. "It was mother's wish that I, as the oldest

of her boys, should have the watch, while Walter was to have father's ring, and Larry mother's." He turned away to wipe something like a tear from his eye. "Job Dowling is so flinty-hearted he can't understand these things. His one thought was to turn the watch, rings, and other jewelry into gold."

"Let us go down for lunch, and then we can take a walk along the Bowery," suggested Gilbert. "We might see something of the jewelry, by blind luck. Besides, we can take in the war bulletins, and, if I can, I'm going to learn something more of this troop of Rough Riders Roosevelt is organizing."

One o'clock found the pair travelling towards the teeming east side of the metropolis. At every corner where there happened to be a bulletin board a crowd was collected. Beyond a doubt the city was going war mad.

"Come on in and volunteer! Come now, gents!" It was the voice of a red-faced man standing in front of a shabby-looking store. The doorway was draped with a large flag, and inside sat several men at tables, taking down the names and addresses of applicants.

"Here's your chance, Ben!" laughed Gilbert. "No time for enlisting like the present."

"Thanks — I don't think I care to enlist here," returned the youth. "If I could, I would like to join one of the regular regiments, like that we saw at the armory."

"Why, Ben Russell, do you think of enlisting?" The words came from close at hand, and Ben found his shoulder caught by a heavy-set young man of twenty. The young man's name was Frank Bulkley, and he had been a clerk in the chemical establishment next to Richard Snodgrass' store. Bulkley was a nephew to Mrs. Gibson, Ben's boarding mistress, and the two were well acquainted.

"Yes, I am thinking of enlisting, Frank," was the answer. "Let me see; aren't you a soldier already?"

"To be sure I am. I belong to the Seventy-first Regiment of this state, and I'm first sergeant of our company, the best company, too, in the regiment, let me tell you. If you and Pennington think of enlisting, you must join our company by all means." And Frank Bulkley came between the pair and caught each by the arm.

"Oh, I'm going to join the cavalry if I join anything," responded Gilbert. "You know we Southerners prefer riding, and I'd feel more at home in the saddle than on foot. I want to find out about

this troop of Rough Riders Roosevelt is going to raise."

"Doc Graham can tell you about that. He knows Theodore Roosevelt quite well — was out West with him on a hunting expedition just before Roosevelt came to New York to enter politics. I'm astonished to think Roosevelt is to give up his position as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, but it only shows what true American patriotism amounts to." Frank Bulkley turned to Ben. "You don't want to become a cavalryman, do you?"

"No; I'll become just an ordinary foot-soldier like yourself, Frank."

"Then you must join our company. You'll find the boys a first-rate crowd. Most of them are young fellows."

"But your regiment may not be called upon to go out."

"Colonel Greene feels certain we will be. He practically said that he had the governor's assurance of it."

"Where can I find this Doc Graham?" questioned Gilbert. To his Southern mind nothing was finer than the picture of a daring cavalryman on a dashing black steed.

"He's down in the Temple Court building on Beekman Street, in the offices of Raymond & Graham. If you want to see him you had better do so soon, for he is going to Washington to join Roosevelt in a few days."

"I'll see him this afternoon!" exclaimed Gilbert.

For two hours he and Ben wandered along the Bowery, looking into this pawnshop and that, but without catching sight of the property Job Dowling had lost. Then, as the friends emerged upon Park Row, Gilbert hurried off for Temple Court, while Ben took up his station near the newspaper offices.

There was even more exciting news than there had been the day previous. Not only Havana but a great number of smaller ports east and west of it were being blockaded, and the gunboat *Nashville* had taken a prize in the shape of the *Buena Ventura*, a vessel of 1700 tons, having on board a cargo of lumber. In addition to this Congress was preparing to pass a special Army Bill, and Spain had called out 30,000 additional soldiers by royal decree. The war was on; there was no longer any doubt of it.

"Doesn't look as if there could be any backing out now," remarked the youth to an elderly gentleman standing beside him.

"There should be no backing out," was the firm reply. "We owe it to the Cubans and to the cause of humanity to expel the Spanish from Cuba. The poor fellows down there have been fighting for their freedom for three years, and they deserve to have it. I have been in Cuba and I know."

"Have you been there lately?"

"I came home with Fitzhugh Lee and was among the last to leave Havana. I can tell you the excitement was intense and no American was safe. I had money invested in a sugar plantation, but that has been swept away by this struggle between the Spanish and the insurgents."

"May I ask if you saw any of the fighting?" went on Ben, curiously.

"I saw more than I cared to see. The first uprising was on February 24, 1895, in the Santiago, Santa Clara, and Matanzas provinces. I was in eastern Cuba on a visit at the time, and it was a hot quarrel between those who wished to remain under Spanish rule and those who declared for freedom. Then, just three years ago to-day, I was at the battle of Ramon de las Jaguas, where a hundred Spaniards were killed and about one-third of that number of Cubans."

"I understand that the Cubans try continually to draw the Spaniards into ambush."

"They have to do that, for what can a half-starved, poorly-equipped body of men do in the open against soldiers who have everything they require? Many of the Cubans are armed only with their machetes, — long, stout knives used for cutting down sugar-cane, — and they would know very little about using rifles even if they were given them. Of course, some of the soldiers are well armed, but they are in the minority."

"I presume if we send an army to Cuba the Cubans will co-operate with us."

"I think they will, although there may be a clash between American and Cuban leaders as to who shall plan and lead in the campaign. The Cubans declare that they are on the threshold of a final victory, and it may be that they will be jealous of their laurels."

"But are they so nearly victorious?"

"I do not think so. It is true they are very strong in the interior of the island and hold many small towns, but their so-called attacks upon Havana have proven failures; they have done but little in and around Santiago on the southeast coast, and

I do not believe that a single seaport along the whole two thousand miles of coast-line is open to them."

"That certainly doesn't look like a victory."

"They are relying, to my way of thinking, upon worrying Spain into relinquishing her hold. So far this rebellion has cost the mother country many millions of dollars, which she has been forced to borrow from foreign bankers. If Spain's credit ceases, the war must cease. On the other hand, Spain feels she must not let go, for the cost of this war must come out of revenue from Cuba principally, with aid from Porto Rico and the Philippines, her other colonial possessions of value. She cannot pay the bill out of her home treasury."

"When you were in Havana did you find so many cases of starvation as reported in our papers? Excuse me for asking, but I am tremendously interested, and expect to join the volunteers when they are called out."

The elderly gentleman smiled. "Your determination does you credit, my young friend, for the government will have need of young blood. Yes, I did find much destitution among those who had been driven in by General Blanco's order. I can

cite you one case in particular. There was a family consisting of a mother, three small children, and an aged grandfather. These people had lived on a small farm some thirty miles south of Havana, a farm worked by the husband of the woman. The husband entered the rebel army, and the others were at once hustled — I can use no other word — away from their home and driven into the city by General Blanco's order. They knew no one in the city, and no government aid was given to them. The woman and the aged man sought work, but Havana was so overcrowded with help nothing was to be had, and that family would have starved to death had not my friends and I assisted them. And that case of misery is only one of thousands among the *reconcentrados*, as they are called."

"That is a fearful state of affairs, sir."

"Fearful is not a strong enough word, — it is atrocious, abominable, — to make innocent women, children, and helpless old men suffer like that. To help those poor people would alone be justification enough for this war, without remembering the *Maine* or anything else," concluded the gentleman, and with a nod he passed on.

CHAPTER VII

BEN JOINS THE MILITIA

"I CAN'T find that valise, and I'm sick and tired of the city, and I'm goin' back to Buffalo fust thing in the mornin'."

It was Job Dowling who spoke, as he threw himself on a chair in Ben's room and heaved a mountainous sigh. For three days he had haunted the police headquarters, buttonholed every officer that he ran across, and followed up his nephew in a tour of the pawnshops.

"I calkerlate the thief got away jest as fast as he could make tracks," he went on, "and to stay here is only a sheer waste o' board money. I'm a-payin' fifty cents a night where I sleep, and the bed is as hard as a board and full o' bugs, and I can't git no kind o' a meal less'n fifteen or twenty cents. I'm goin' back."

"I think myself it's the best thing you can do, Uncle Job," returned Ben, as calmly as he could.

"Of course I am terribly put out over the loss of the watch and jewelry, but what can't be helped can't be helped, and that is all there is to it."

"I was a-actin' for what I thought was best," said the old miser, half whiningly. "I was calkerlatin' to put solid money in the bank for you and Walter and Larry." And he gave a deep groan.

A great change had come over Ben's guardian. The robbery had opened his eyes to the fact that he was not as shrewd as he had deemed himself, and he was in momentary terror that his nephew might hold him accountable before the law for the loss. He had a little property of his own, but to give that up would have been like parting with his heart's blood.

It was early in the evening, and Gilbert had gone off to have a second interview with Doc Graham. The first interview, down in the office in Temple Court, had promised well, and it looked as if the young Southerner would really become a member of Roosevelt's Rough Riders.

"I would rather have you remain in town until I've enlisted," resumed Ben. "There might be some trouble, even though I have that permit you signed."

"I don't see why you want to turn sodger," began

Job Dowling, when a step was heard in the hall and a knock sounded on the door.

"Frank!" cried Ben, as the young sergeant entered. The newcomer and the youth's guardian were speedily introduced.

"Glorious news!" burst out Frank Bulkley. "Governor Black has called out the first, second and third brigades of New York and Brooklyn, and we are to get ready to leave the city as soon as possible."

Ben's heart gave a jump. "Then your regiment is *sure* to go? How do you like the prospect?"

"Didn't I just say it was glorious news? Would I say that if I wasn't pleased? I came here just as fast as the car could bring me. Our company is short exactly eight men, and beyond a doubt those men will apply for enlistment to-night. So I—"

"You want me to come to the armory and enter my name?" broke in Ben, quickly. "I'll do it—now you are certain you'll not be left behind. You'll come, won't you, Uncle Job?"

"Where to?"

"The Seventy-first Regiment's armory. Frank is a sergeant in one of the companies, and I'm going to enlist with him, if I can."

"Well, I dunno. It's kind o' sudden. If you're enlisted ye can't back out."

"I won't want to back out. I've been reading up on this war trouble every day, and I'm going to help the Cubans to freedom and help give Spain the thrashing she deserves for allowing the *Maine* to be blown up. Come on, and let's forget about that stolen jewelry," and he caught his guardian by the arm.

The mentioning of the jewelry did more than any argument could have accomplished, and Job Dowling arose and buttoned up his long, rusty coat and adjusted his soiled collar and greasy stock. "All right, if you're bent on it, Ben," he murmured. "But, recollect, I didn't advise it, and don't blame me if ye come back minus an arm or a leg, or with that murderous yellow fever in your system."

The three were soon on the way, Job Dowling still growling, but so softly that neither Ben nor Frank Bulkley could make out what he said. It was a common trait with the old miser to growl, even if there was no cause for growling.

The armory was crowded with men, and here and there a sprinkling of ladies and girls, — the wives, sweethearts, and children of the soldiers, — and an

occasional mother, old and gray, gazing proudly at her soldier boy as he went through the military exercise laid down for him.

"This way," said Frank, pushing through a knot of men about the door to a side room. Inside were several officers seated at a long table covered with books and blanks. Reaching the table, Frank saluted his superiors.

"Lieutenant Rowan, this is my friend, Benjamin Russell," he said. "He is ready to enlist at once."

The lieutenant looked at Ben critically, and so did the other officers. The youth could not help flushing, yet he returned the gaze unflinchingly. Evidently the first impression was a favorable one.

"You are ready to enlist in the militia of the state of New York?" asked one of the officers.

"I am, sir."

"Are you willing to be mustered from the militia into the United States Army if you pass the proper examination?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your name?"

"Benjamin A. Russell."

"Your age?"

"I was eighteen last Fourth of July."

"An independence boy, eh?" laughed the lieutenant. "You ought to make a good soldier." And a general smile followed.

"As you are under age, Russell, you will have to get the consent of your parents or guardian before we can consider your application," went on the officer who had previously spoken.

"My parents are dead, sir. This is my guardian, Mr. Job Dowling, and here is his consent in writing," and Ben produced the paper.

"Mr. Dowling, you are willing your ward, Benjamin Russell, should join the militia and become mustered into the United States Army?"

"Well — I — guess so. It's his own doin's."

"You will please answer me more directly, sir."

"What's thet?"

"Yes or no, please."

"Oh! Yes; since he wants to jine."

"Very well; kindly affix your name here."

The officer shoved forward a sheet upon which he had been writing, and, with a great deal of labor, Job Dowling wrote his name on a line pointed out in a heavy scrawl. "Now, remember, Ben, it's your doin's, not mine," he whispered, as he drew back.

"Russell, are you over five feet four inches in height?"

"I am five feet six inches tall."

"What do you weigh?"

"About one hundred and thirty pounds."

"Have you any physical disability? I merely ask to avoid the trouble of a doctor's examination, in case you have. You will be examined even if you say you are sound."

"I am perfectly well, to the best of my knowledge, sir. I haven't needed a doctor for years."

"You look healthy. As we are to leave New York as soon as possible, and the surgeon is here, you may go in for your physical examination at once, if you wish. Bulkley has recommended you highly, and so has a certain Mr. Snodgrass; so there will be no trouble in joining this company if you can stand the tests."

"I am ready if you are, sir."

Without further words, Ben was led off to a side room in the armory, while the officers turned to another applicant. Two physicians were in attendance in the side room, and the youth was ordered to strip, after which he was carefully examined, from a medical standpoint, from head to

feet. Following this, he was weighed and measured, and then his eyesight and hearing were tested.

"You're as sound as a dollar, Russell," remarked one of the physicians, when it was all over. "I wish I could say as much for all who apply. Here is your certificate."

"I knew you would pass," cried Frank, as he again took charge of Ben. "You'll make a splendid soldier. Come on back, and I'll introduce you to Captain Blank, and then you can be sworn in, and I'll get you in the awkward squad I'm to drill."

They found the captain surrounded by a crowd of military men; for the orders to get ready to move had caused much excitement. "Very glad to know you, Russell, and glad to learn you passed the tests so well," was the greeting received, with a hand-shake. "Bulkley, you must introduce him around and make him feel at home. I want all my boys to feel like brothers," and with a smile, Captain Blank dismissed them.

The swearing in took but a few minutes, and then Ben signed the muster-roll of the company in a firm hand.

"You're a soldier now," cried Frank, and shook

hands. Even Job Dowling smiled faintly, and stretched forth his bony fingers hesitatingly. "I hope it's for your good, Ben," he muttered. "But there ain't no tellin' till the war's over."

There were but six in the awkward squad which Frank Bulkley led to a corner for drill, — six young fellows that had enlisted within the past forty-eight hours. Two were city youths, evidently clerks, the third was of Irish extraction, the fourth a German, and the fifth undoubtedly a full-blooded Yankee, by the drawl in his voice. The sixth recruit was Ben himself.

"Now then, fellows, pay strict attention to what I say, and you won't have to remain in the awkward squad long," began Frank, after he had placed the six in a row, with Ben at the right of the line.

"Sure, and I don't see what you call it an awkward squad for," remarked Dan Casey, the Irish recruit. "We're a fine body enough, so we are!"

"Silence, please; soldiers must never speak in the ranks."

"Dot's vere you puts your foot in him, Casey," remarked Carl Stummer, the German recruit, who lived in the same apartment house with Casey. "Now I shan't say me von vord."

"What are you doin' now but talkin', Stummer?" grinned Casey; then, as he caught Sergeant Bulkley's stern eye, he straightened up and closed his mouth with the rapidity of a mouse-trap.

"Creation —" began Peter Wilkens, the Yankee lad, but stopped short, while Ben and the two clerks laughed; and that ended talking in the awkward squad for that night.

"Now, the first thing to do is to stand in a straight row, with your feet thrown out at a slight angle, your head up, and your shoulders well back," went on Sergeant Frank. "Put your arms down straight, and bend your palms slightly forward. Try to make the position natural, not woodeny."

"It's not —" arose upon Casey's lips, but ended in a gurgle. Carl Stummer was on the point of laughing, but the sergeant's gaze caused the smile to quickly fade.

"Now, that's a fairly good line, although you'll do better after you get used to it," continued Sergeant Frank. "Look straight ahead; Eyes front is the command. Now, Eyes right! Eyes front! Eyes left! Those commands explain themselves. We'll try it again."

And they did try it again, not once, but a dozen

times, until the six pairs of eyes moved like clockwork.

"Now let us try to mark time," went on the young instructor. "That means to keep step without moving forward. Commence with the left foot, and that means the first beat of the bass drum when you're on the march. Now then, attention! Mark — time!" And down came six left feet with a determined stamp, one after another. "That won't do — you must come down as one man. Try again — Mark — time! Left, right, left, right, left, right! There, that is better; you'll soon get the movement," and he gave Ben a nod of approval, for Ben had done better than any of the others.

Marking time having come to an end, the young sergeant showed the squad how to wheel, right and left, and how to go through the motion of about face. This was hot work in the overcrowded armory, and the perspiration poured from Ben's face. Yet he did not lag in the drill, and with his heart thoroughly in his work, did fully as well as any one else.

"We'll call it off for to-night," said Sergeant Frank, after nearly two hours had gone by. "But before you go the quartermaster wants to have

each of you measured for his uniform, so he can rush the order for suits through. How many of you would like to come here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning for drill? It's not compulsory, but Captain Blank would like the company to march away with full ranks and each man thoroughly trained."

"I'll come," answered Ben, promptly, and so did Casey, Stummer, and one of the others. The rest were not sure, but said they would come if they could. There the matter rested, and after leaving his measure, Ben returned to his boarding-house, and at the door separated from his uncle.

"I'm goin' to take the six o'clock train for home," said Job Dowling, as he held out his hand. "Remember, this jinin' the army is your own doin's, Ben. But I wish ye luck, — an' supposin' we let bygones be bygones," and as the two shook hands, Ben promised. It was the last the youth saw of his guardian for a long while to come.

On the table in his room Ben found a note awaiting him. It was from Gilbert, and contained the following: —

"DEAR BEN: I am right in it, as the saying goes. Have fixed it to join the Rough Riders, and am to help arrange for horses and the like. I leave at once for the South, with Doc Graham, and we are to stop off at Washington and confer with Mr. Roosevelt and a certain Colonel Wood. Good-by to you, and I sincerely hope we meet again, either in camp or on a glorious battlefield."

CHAPTER VIII

OFF FOR CAMP BLACK

The regiment which Ben had joined had been called out by the governor during the latter part of April, but it was not until early in May that the soldiers left the metropolis to unite with thousands of others in a camp at Hempstead Plains, Long Island.

During this time history was being made with great rapidity. The blockade around Havana had been strengthened, and hardly a day passed but that one or more prizes were taken. The majority of these captures were accomplished with ease, yet here and there a lively time was had.

In the meanwhile a necessary Army Bill was passed by Congress, and the House voted to declare war, — rather a useless proceeding, since war was already an assured fact. In the midst of the excitement the venerable Secretary of State, John Sherman, feeling he could not conduct the duties of his office

during such trying times, resigned, leaving the position to be filled by Assistant Secretary Day.

The regular army, consisting of some twenty-five thousand men, was hurried with all possible speed to points of concentration in the southeast, only a handful being left to guard the western and southern coasts and the Indian reservations. To show how ignorant some of the Spanish were of our resources, and of the true condition of internal affairs here, it may be added that a Spanish newspaper of this date contains an editorial setting forth that "it will be impossible for the Americans to use their soldiers against Spain, for if they are withdrawn from the frontier, the hordes of savages being held in check will descend upon their principal cities and massacre the inhabitants!"

The one hundred and twenty-five thousand volunteers called for by President McKinley were to come from the various states and territories, each to furnish its quota according to population, and from Maine to California the militia were in a bustle, preparing to march to their various state camps, there to be mustered into the service of the United States. In addition to this, many private parties began to raise companies and regiments,

and numbers of civic societies offered their services, not the least of which were veterans of the Civil War, North and South, — too old to go, yet as young of heart as ever, — Italian and Greek benevolent associations, German singing societies, and colored companies. The war fever spread to all our seats of learning, and Yale and other colleges put students into the field.

It was not thought that Spain would allow the blockade of Havana to go on without some effort being made to raise it, or to retaliate, and a strict watch was kept along our coasts for the possible appearance of her warships, and the harbors of many of the larger cities, like New York, Boston, and Charleston, were mined, and lighthouses were left unlit during the night.

On Sunday, May 1, news reached the United States which electrified the people and sent a thrill of pride through every patriotic heart. Commodore, afterwards Admiral, George Dewey, of the Asiatic Squadron of the United States Navy, had met a strong fleet of Spanish warships in Manila Bay of the Philippine Islands, and destroyed the enemy completely, and had done this without the loss of a single ship or a single man

killed. How this was accomplished has been told, in all its glorious details, in "Under Dewey at Manila."

"It's the greatest news ever received!" cried Ben, enthusiastically, in speaking of it to Frank Bulkley. "My! but wouldn't I like to have been there to see the battle. Eight or nine warships sunk or burned and we come off with scarcely a scratch! Hurrah!" And he flung his soldier cap high in the air.

Ben now had his complete army outfit, and drilling for nearly a week with and without a gun had made of him quite a soldier. He was no longer in the awkward squad, but in the regular company, and had even taken several lessons in loading and shooting.

The outfit furnished to him consisted of a suit of clothes and a slouch hat, a pair of heavy shoes and leggings to go over them, a gun, a bayonet, an intrenching knife, a haversack containing a knife, a fork, a spoon, and a meat can; a canteen and a tin cup, and a blanket. In addition to these, he was required to provide himself with an extra set of underclothing, a towel, cake of soap, comb and brush, thread and needles, court-plaster, and numerous other odds and ends.

"By creation! but thet air pack is going to weigh something," remarked Peter Wilkens, as he stood near Ben, surveying the pile before him on the armory floor. "Do all soldiers have to carry sech a load?"

"Most of them do," answered an officer standing by. "In the regular army some men dispense with the haversack and roll their stuff in their blanket, which they strap over one shoulder. When you are on the march you'll have to carry a wall of a tent in addition to what you have there."

"Phew! mebbe the cap'n 'll want me to carry a feather bed for him, too," murmured Peter, as he got down to roll his blanket.

"I shan't mind that load up here," said Ben. "But when we get down in Cuba, with the thermometer up to a hundred in the shade, why—" he finished with a doubtful shake of his head. "Never mind, we're working for Uncle Sam, Wilkens, so let's make the best of it."

"That's right, Russell; we'll be after lookin' on the sunny side," put in Casey. "Sure, an' them Spaniards will suffer more than we, poor lads! Just wait till the Sivinty-first gets after 'em!"

IT WAS A ROYAL SEND-OFF Page 81

Bright and early on the day following, the soldiers turned out *en masse* and made their way to the Long Island ferry, where they took passage for Long Island City. How proud Ben felt as he marched along, for this was the first time he had paraded since enlisting! How he wished Walter and Larry could be there to see him! Little did he dream of the exciting scenes through which his younger brother, afloat on the other side of the world, was passing, or of what Walter, in Boston, was doing. The band played, the people along the line hurrahed, and it was a great time all around.

At Long Island City the large depot was packed with soldiers and those who had come to see them off. Again the band blared forth, handkerchiefs fluttered, and hundreds of flags flung their folds to the breeze. As train load after train load of soldiers departed, a mighty shout went up, and the steam whistles from the boats along shore and the near-by factories added to the din. It was a royal send-off, yet no more enthusiastic than was received by our gallant boys everywhere.

"It makes one feel like jumping out of his skin," remarked Ben to Frank, as he waved a last adieu to

a group of girls who stood on a pile of railroad ties, waving their handkerchiefs at all who passed. "War seems to make us all brothers — and sisters."

"And how those whistles are blowing!" answered Frank. "They'll sing in my ears for a week."

"How long will it take us to get to Camp Black?" asked a soldier sitting near by.

"About two hours, I think. The road is rather blocked, you know. It will be a fine ride as soon as we get out into the country districts."

"Have you ever been to Hempstead Plains?"

"No; but I understand it is an almost unbroken plain, with here and there a slight hollow, and without trees or brush. The government selected it because it is an easy place from which to send troops in various directions," concluded Frank.

Soon the city had been left behind, and the train passed orchards filled with apple blossoms and meadow lands rich with fresh green grass and spring flowers. The sun was shining brightly; and as the soldiers moved through the cars, the general appearance was that of holiday-making. "Dis vos like a big-nic of der Schutzen Bund," remarked Stummer. "Of var been like dis all der

times, I keep me right on peing a soldier, hey, Casey?"

"'Twon't be all like this, me Dutch frind," answered the Irish volunteer. "If I can read the signs right, there's a storm brewing, and we'll catch it on our first night out;" and Casey was right, much to Stummer's disgust. The wind veered around while the troops were leaving the trains at Garden City, and blew in strong and threateningly from the ocean.

It was a two miles tramp to camp; and now Ben got his first experience of soldier life as, with loaded knapsack and blanket, he ploughed along with the others over the rough stubble and through the meshy meadow grass. Once he went down in a hole, to pick himself up amid a general laugh from his companions in arms.

"And is this where we're to camp?" cried Frank, as the company finally came to a halt. "Where are the tents? I thought they were to be in readiness for us."

Such had been the intention; but some one had blundered; the freight trains with stores were slow in arriving, and eight thousand soldiers stood in the open, watching the sun go down, and wondering

what sort of a first night they were to put in. The wind was blowing colder and colder; and a mist was creeping up from the sea, — a mist that soon gave way to a pitiless rain.

"This is army life with a vengeance," remarked Frank, as he and Ben strode off, to see what the prospects for shelter were. "I didn't enlist to sleep out in the open."

"Stummer declares he will dig himself a cave in the ground," laughed Ben. "Now, if we only had a cup of hot coffee — Hurrah! there is a wagon load of wood, with the cook stove dangling underneath, and there is Crowley the cook. We're going to have something for the inner man."

"Crowley, Crowley, give us something to eat!
Crowley, Crowley, or we shall die!"

came in a sing-song wail from a score of soldiers, as they advanced in a mock attack on the wood wagon.

"I'd like to know how I'm going to give you something to eat with the provision train half a mile off," muttered Crowley. "Where are your rations?"

"Devoured long ago, Crowley, dear," came in a piping tone from one soldier. "Oh, dear, good

Crowley, don't let me die of starvation, and in the open air, too!" and a roar went up.

"I'll tell you what," went on Crowley, hopping to the ground. "I'll start up a fire, and you can gather around and get warm; and I'll cook anything you'll bring me, and that's the best I can do. Corporal Duckworth and four others are waiting for our stores; but when they will get here, the railroad company alone knows."

The fire was started, and a huge kettle of water put on, in expectation that meat and coffee would soon arrive. The warmth from the blaze was cheering, and the soldiers drew as close as possible.

"I see several wagons coming this way," said Ben, half an hour later. "They are full of poles."

"The tents! the tents!" was the cry, and it proved to be correct. Five minutes later the white shelters were springing up like magic upon every side, until the vast plain was dotted with thousands of them. Straw followed the tents; and the soldiers proceeded to fix up their military homes, each to suit his own taste and that of his tent-mates.

CHAPTER IX

A WEEK OF DISCOMFORT

"My, but this is a corker!"

It was Frank who uttered the words. He was standing up in the centre of the circular tent with his coat pulled tightly around him, shivering as though with the chills. Outside it was pitch dark, with the wind blowing fiercely and the rain coming down in torrents.

"I'm wet to the skin," he went on, to Ben, who sat up, huddled in half a bundle of wet straw. "And I believe my shoes have a pint of ice-water in them."

"I think myself that the heat in Cuba would be preferable to this," answered Ben, grimly. "If I smoked I would light a pipe just to keep my nose warm. If this keeps on — Hullo, what's that?"

A sound of pattering feet in the company's street

had reached his ears. He looked out of the tent flap, to behold half a dozen soldiers running and slapping their hands over their chests. "We're bound to keep warm somehow!" shouted one of the number. "If we stayed in our tent we'd be frozen stiff."

"You can thank your stars you're not in my place to-night," came from the corporal of the guard, as he shuffled up. "Every man out seems to think it's my fault he's on picket duty, and they're calling me on the slightest provocation. They think — There it goes again," he continued, as a cry, "Corporal of the guard, number seven!" rang out through the whistling wind. "Now that's from Blinkey Davis, and he's down in the hollow, with a foot of water to wade through to get to him. He'll say he saw something suspicious and then ask me for a match, see if he don't;" and away went the corporal, muttering things under his breath far from complimentary to the picket man in question.

"Bad as it is here, I'm glad I'm not out," remarked Ben, when an extra puff of wind caused all of those inside of the tent to leap up in alarm.

"We didn't put this tent up sthrong enough,"

came from Casey. "Give me the spade an' I'll pound down thim pegs," and he went to work, with Ben assisting him.

It was not until after midnight that Ben dropped into a doze, with Frank sleeping close upon one side and Wilkens upon the other, in order to keep out as much of the cold as possible. At half-past six the dull rattle of wet drums awoke him, and he crawled outside. It was still raining, although not so hard as before.

"Vot ve got to do now?" asked Stummer, who stood in the middle of the muddy and slippery company street. "Da vont call us to barade in dis veather, vill da?"

"Certainly they will," answered Frank. "Come now, tumble out and get yourselves into shape."

Although it had rained all night, no water available for washing purposes was at hand. "There is a driven well some distance back of our camp," said Frank. "We'll go there for a bucketful," and off he and Ben started.

On returning, the two friends found everybody up, and soon the roll of the company was called. Then came the sick call, but, curiously enough, although a few of the men were barking with

slight colds, nobody considered himself unwell enough to go to the hospital tent.

Never was a breakfast eaten with more avidity than on that morning. All that Ben received was a cup of coffee, some hardtack, and a boiled egg, yet no meal at Mrs. Gibson's had tasted sweeter.

"Sure, and wan could eat anything," remarked Casey, as he soaked up his hardtack. "This warm coffee do be fit for the gods," and he gulped it down with great gusto.

"We're not to go on a regular war footing until to-morrow," said the captain to Frank, while Ben was within hearing. "The commandant has decided that to-day shall be given over to making the boys as comfortable as possible. We'll have a general parade, and that's all."

"What did he mean by going on a war footing?" questioned Ben, later; and Frank showed him a typewritten copy of a general order which had been issued. Among other things this contained a time schedule for the camp, and as some of my young readers may be curious to know just how the soldiers put in the hours each day, I insert the schedule here.

First call for reveille	5.25 A.M.
Reveille	5.30 "
Assembly for roll-call	5.35 "
Sick call	5.45 "
Mess call (breakfast)	5.55 "
Squad and company drill	6.25 "
Guard mount	7.55 "
Adjutant's call	8.10 "
Policing camp (cleaning up)	8.30 "
Battalion drill	10.00 "
Mess call (dinner)	12.00 "
Regimental drill	3.30 P.M.
Mess call (supper)	5.00 "
General parade	Half hour before sunset.
Tattoo	9.30 P.M.
Taps	10.00 "

"That is easy enough to understand," said Ben, after he had studied the sheet. "First we get up and have breakfast. Then we drill in squads or the whole company drills together. After that we clean up the camp, and then our major will take our battalion of four companies and drill them together. That will give us an appetite for dinner, and to shake down our feed we will have a drill by the whole regiment of twelve companies. Supper will be served at five o'clock, and just before sunset we'll have a parade by the whole brigade, or by several brigades. It's as plain as day."

"It is to you — because you are a born soldier," laughed Frank. "Some fellows can't get that thing through their heads to save their lives, and are continually asking some other chaps what's to come next."

"I see there are to be no drills on Sunday," went on Ben, glancing at the bottom of the sheet, "'but divine services shall be held if practicable.' I like that. If I know anything about it, our chaplain is a fine man, and I'll like to hear him preach out here in the open."

"If it doesn't keep on raining," returned Frank, as he hurried off, to attend to his duties as a sergeant.

A short while later found Ben hard at work with a spade, helping to dig a trench around their tent, that the water from the sides might run off and not soak underneath. Casey was with him.

"It's not yourself as is used to such labor, I'll warrant," grinned the young Irish soldier. "It's a pen you're used to handlin', ain't it now?"

"Hardly, Casey; I was a clerk in a hardware store. I don't mind this, though. It's not so very hard."

"I used to work on a truck farm over to Long

Island City, so digging comes natural to me. Now, Stummer, there, worked at silversmithing, and he can no more handle a spade than a cow."

"Vot's dot?" cried the German volunteer. "You vos know noddings apout dot, Casey. Gif me dot spade vonce!" and he tried to take the implement.

"Go on with you!" answered Casey, and put the spade behind him. A good-natured scuffle ensued, and a moment later both slipped in the wet mud, and one fell flat on his back, while the other pitched on his face.

"Now look phat ye have done!" growled Casey, speaking with a broad accent when excited. "Oi told ye to let me alone. See, me face is all covered wid mud!"

"It vos your fault; you knocked both of us down!" bellowed Carl Stummer. "Chust see mine pack alretty! How I vos going on trill mid such a coad as dot, hey?" and he held up the coat-tails on either side of him.

"Go for him, Dutchy!" cried one of a number of soldiers standing near. "Show him that sauer-kraut is as good as corn beef and cabbage, any day."

"You chust mine your own beesness," answered

Stummer. "You dink ve fight chust to blease you, hey? Vell, ve ton't; ain't dot so, Casey?"

"Fight? Saints preserve us, no!" ejaculated the young Irish volunteer. "We'll be after savin' that for the Spaniards. Let's both get a washup!" and away they went, arm in arm, for the driven well.

"By gum! but they air a great team," said Peter Wilkens, gazing after them. "They're as different ez day an' night, yet they air like two brothers. I reckon they're the kind o' foreign stock as is helpin' to make these United States wot they air," and he turned in to take Casey's place on the trenches.

Although camp duty was rather lax on that day, yet towards noon the regiment was called out, to pay its respects to the major-general, at his headquarters on the hill. In spite of the softly falling rain, the soldier boys presented a gay appearance as they marched by with colors flying and a band playing a patriotic grand march.

"This is something like," said Ben, when it was all over. "But I shan't really feel like a volunteer until I have been mustered in by the United States regulars."

"That will come in due time," answered Frank. "I believe they'll start in on examining the men

to-day or to-morrow. All those things take time, you know. We've got to have a lot of new guns and other things, too."

Everybody was hoping it would clear up on the day following, but instead it rained as hard as ever, and this kept up for forty-eight hours after, until in the hollow where Ben's regiment was placed, the water was from six inches to a foot and a half deep. "Ef it gits much deeper, we'll have to take to boats; that's ez true ez your born," said Peter Wilkens.

"Yes, or else we'll wake up some mornin' drowned," answered Casey, soberly.

The rain interfered seriously with the cooking arrangements, and more than once the soldier boys were treated to food but half done. Yet, if there was any grumbling, it was done in private, for every one was on his mettle and prepared to show that as a soldier he could stand almost anything.

"We're out of it at last, thank goodness!" cried Ben, on Friday, as the sun shone forth; but, alas! his joy was short-lived. By night it had settled down to rain again. "It's as bad as at McClellan's campaign on the Peninsula, during the Civil War," he grumbled to Frank. "At that time, I understand, it rained twenty days out of thirty, and the

artillery got stuck so deeply in the mud it could scarcely be budged."

With the coming on of Saturday night the wind came up again, and it was blowing lively when Ben turned in, utterly worn out over a day's work transferring rations from the freight cars to the regimental quarters.

How long he had been sleeping he did not know. Suddenly a fearful crack of thunder awoke him. As he sat up there came a crack of a different sort as the centre pole of the tent snapped in halves. Down came the canvas upon his own head and those of his companions. Then came a strange roaring of wind, and the youth felt himself lifted up into the air and borne he knew not whither.

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH BEN IS MUSTERED INTO THE UNITED STATES SERVICE

"HELP! help! Somebody pull down this tent, or I'll be blown up into the clouds!"

Such was Ben's muffled cry, as he felt himself going up, wound around and around in the sheet, from which he tried in vain to extricate himself. Had there not been so much wind, he must have been smothered.

A regular down-east gale had struck Camp Black in all its merciless fury, levelling tents, scattering records, stampeding horses, and creating a general havoc. When it was over, folks residing in the vicinity stated they had not seen such a storm for ten years, and the soldiers were quite willing to believe this true.

Though Ben's flight was uncertain, it was of short duration. A distance of less than thirty feet was covered, when the canvas roll came down with a

swish and a bang upon the headquarters of the first and second lieutenants, wrecking one side of the structure and dumping Ben upon the second lieutenant's breast.

"For the love of General Miles!" came in a gasp, as the officer tried to rise. "What's this? —a cyclone?"

"I — I — don't know what it is!" panted Ben, crawling from the wreckage. "The wind took me right up, and that's our tent, which stood the second below this."

"You don't tell me, Russell! You're lucky to escape without broken bones. The next time you try flying, choose some other course, please," and the officer began to examine his breast to learn if any bones were broken.

"I trust you are not hurt, sir. I didn't sail up on purpose, I can tell you that."

"I don't suppose you did. No, I'm not hurt. But this — "

"Catch those stakes!" burst in the first lieutenant. "Quick, or this tent — "

The two officers and Ben ran to hold the tent down, but it was too late. With a rush the wind came underneath, and over went the canvas, carry-

ing the men's cots with it. The air was filled with rain, bits of straw, shreds of cloth and tent pegs, not to mention numerous articles of wearing-apparel.

"Well, this is soldiering under difficulties, I must declare," was the first lieutenant's comment, as, standing out in the howling element, he surveyed the scene as well as the blackness of the night would permit.

"Anybody hurt?" It was a call from Captain Blank, as he passed rapidly through the desolated company street. "Too bad, lads, but we're all in it. My tent is down, too. I'm afraid but little can be done until morning."

"Who cares?" cried a light-hearted soldier, as he brushed the water from his face. "Down with Spain, and remember the *Maine!*" And this brought forth a cheer, after which every one felt better.

"It's hailing!" ejaculated Casey, a while later, and such was a fact. The hail was fine and as sharp as glass, and seemed to cut to the bone.

The lowest part of the hollow in which the regiment was encamped was knee-deep in water, and here the soldiers were struggling to keep their ef-

fects from drifting away. Lights could not be kept lit, and many an uncomfortable tumble was had in the darkness.

"I don't know as I'll go to church services today," said Frank to Ben, after a late breakfast had been served on Sunday morning. "The chaplain will be in a tent, but most of the boys will have to stand outside."

"I'm going, Frank. I never yet missed church on a Sunday, even when I was tramping from Buffalo to New York. We can't get much wetter than we are now."

"Oh, yes, but it — I don't think it will amount to anything," murmured the young sergeant.

"I think it will; we're sure to have something patriotic. Come on, and you'll have something interesting for your mother in your next letter," concluded Ben.

He knew this would decide Frank, for he had heard the young sergeant promise his sister to attend services and keep from drinking while in the army, because the aged mother wished it so. "All right, I'll go!" he cried. "Come on, Wilkens," and the three hurried off arm in arm, and nearly half the company came after.

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the Cross!
Lift high His royal banner!
It must not suffer loss!"

It seemed odd to hear this sung in the open air, with the steady rain pouring down upon the heads of the singers. "Puts me in mind o' singin' at a grave," whispered Peter Wilkens. Yet the soldiers sang loudly and well, showing that their hearts were in harmony with the hymn.

The singing finished, the chaplain arose, and standing upon nothing better than an upturned box, delivered a sermon particularly adapted to the occasion, in which he endeavored to show each of his hearers what his duty was to himself, his country, and his God. Then a prayer was offered, and the brief services came to an end with several hymns, including one which seemed to ring over the entire camp-ground: —

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus
Going on before!"

"It was splendid!" said Frank, after the benediction. "I'm awfully glad I went." And he

squeezed Ben's hand. That first Sunday in camp was never forgotten.

The rain and cold brought a number of the soldiers into difficulty. Everybody wanted a campfire, and as no wood was to be had excepting for cooking purposes, some of the volunteers sneaked off to a private woods back of the grounds, and cut what they wanted. On their return they were met by the provost marshal, the military chief of police, and put in the guard-house for twenty-four hours.

One regiment longed for fresh milk and determined to have it, no matter what the cost. A committee was formed, a fund created, and twelve cows were purchased, one for each company. Then sprang up a rivalry as to which company's cow would furnish the most milk, and many a merry wager was laid as to results. The regiment was good-humoredly dubbed the "Cowboys."

In that camp of ten thousand men, "mascots" were everywhere. Dogs and cats were numerous, and there were likewise a game cock and a Billy goat. The goat was a most pugnacious creature and brought more than one soldier to grief by a secret attack from the rear. Evidently he had a dislike for those of Teutonic extraction, for he never

failed to attack such, and poor Stummer did not dare to go within fifty yards of the beast.

"Dot goat is vorse nor dree Spaniards alretty!" was the way in which the man expressed himself. "Of I vos der colonel, I vould order him court-martialled und shot pefore sunset." Yet Billy lived on, to become, in time, a universal pet.

I mention these little things to show that life in camp, despite the downpour and the chilling winds, was not as devoid of brightness and "go" as one might imagine. The soldiers had enlisted for whatever might come, and one and all were determined to make the best of the situation.

In the meantime physical examinations for entrance into the army of the United States had been going on day after day. To Ben the examination was of small moment, but others were not so fortunate. Of the company of a hundred, six failed to pass, and their places had to be filled by new recruits.

"We are going to enlist to-day," said Frank, on the Tuesday following the rainy Sunday. "I heard Colonel Greene tell the captain so."

The announcement caused a stir in the camp of the regiment. They were to be among the first of

the state's militia to enter the service of the United States. Ben's heart beat high.

"If we're entered first, perhaps we'll go South first," he said. "I'll be glad of it. I don't want to be detailed to guard some fort up North, or some powder magazine or mill. I want to see active service in front of the enemy."

"Maybe it will be more active services nor ye wants," put in Casey. "Now, for my part, I'd rather guard a fort here, wid nice girls comin' in of a Sunday to look at me, than lay in the trenches in Cuba in the rain, with a Spaniard waitin' to pop at my head."

"Oh, Casey, you don't mean that!" cried Ben. "You're as brave as any of us, and I know it."

"Yah, dot's it," added Stummer. "Casey talks mit his mout only."

The expected mustering in of the regiment had attracted a tremendous crowd of visitors to the camp, among whom the ladies and girls predominated. All were in a flutter, and when, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the orders came to fall in for the solemn ceremony, a scene followed hard to describe.

"John, it may be your death warrant," said one

old lady to her son. "Consider well what you are doing."

"I have considered, mother," answered the son, a tall, manly youth of twenty-one. "Uncle Sam needs the services of such as I, and I am going."

"Frank, do you truly wish to join?" It was Frank Bulkley's sister who spoke, a timid girl of seventeen. "Remember mamma has only us two now, since father died."

A lump came up in Frank's throat. "I — I — mother said I should go if I thought it my duty, May," he faltered. "And I do think it my duty. I'll come back all right; never fear," and he kissed her affectionately, while she clung to his neck until the very last moment.

The drums rolled, there was a parting squeezing of hands, and the men fell into their proper places, and began their march to that part of the plain where the mustering in was to occur. As soon as the regiment came to a halt, a guard was formed by other soldiers to keep the crowd of visitors back.

"This is your last chance to draw back, boys, if any of you do not care to enlist in the United States service," said Captain Blank, when the company had been drawn up. "Remember, no men are wanted

who do not desire to go, or who are really needed at home. The roll will be called, and as each man's name is pronounced he will step three paces to the front and bring his gun to a carry arms. If a mistake is made in calling your name, salute the mustering-in officer, step to the front, and explain."

And then started the long task of calling out the full names of nine hundred and eighty-three enlisted men and forty officers.

"Benjamin A. Russell!" came the call, and with a surging heart the youth took his three paces forward and brought his gun from a shoulder to a carry arms.

"David G. Rust," followed, and the drummer of the company also advanced, giving a tap on his drum, since he had no gun to shift. And so the calling off continued, until the end of the long list was reached.

"I will now administer the oath of allegiance," said the mustering-in officer, as he returned once again to Ben's company. "Each man will take off his hat and raise his right hand."

And as the soldiers stood there, under the open sky, with bared heads and uplifted hands, the oath was read, slowly and distinctly, that every one might hear and understand.

"All and each of you do solemnly swear that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America, and that you will serve them honorably and faithfully against all their enemies, whomsoever, and that you will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over you, according to the rules and articles of war, so help you God."

"So help me God!" murmured each man in the ranks, and a few seconds of absolute silence followed. Then came a cheer for the company, from those who had been enlisted but a few minutes previously. The mustering-in officer shook hands with Captain Blank, and welcomed him and his command into the United States army, and then passed on to do his duty elsewhere. When the mustering-in was completed, a band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," and all the military officers within sight and hearing uncovered. The tune was then changed to a lively march, and away swung the regiment for its quarters, amid a wild cheering which kept up for the best part of half an hour.

Ben was a United States soldier at last.

CHAPTER XI

BOUND FOR THE SOUTH

"HERE'S a letter for you, Ben."

It was Frank who spoke. The sergeant had just come along with a number of letters for the men, and he handed over one postmarked Boston.

"It's from Walter," cried the young volunteer, as he scrutinized the superscription. "I wonder what he has to say?" And he opened the communication.

"MY DEAR BEN," so ran the letter. "So you have really become a soldier? I must confess I didn't think you would do it, even though you mentioned such a possibility before war was actually declared. I hope you are doing well, and if you see active service in the South, I trust you will come out a captain, or more.

"As I wrote to you and to Larry, I took the war fever as badly as any one. Phil Newell, the

man who owns the news stand, is an old Civil-War sailor, as I mentioned when I got the position. He filled me with stories of life on a man-o'-war, and yesterday I went over to the navy-yard and enlisted as a gunner's apprentice. I don't know what vessel I'm to go on, but am making a strong pull to get aboard of the *Brooklyn*, the flagship of Commodore Schley's Flying Squadron. Like yourself, I want to get into the thick of it, and not stay up here doing mere coast duty.

"I suppose you'll wonder how I obtained permission to join the navy. I went at Uncle Job just as you did, only, of course, by letter, and he got so scared about that stolen jewelry, he said I could go and do anything I pleased. I think it was a shame to attempt to offer the stuff for sale, and I hope the police will get on the track of it. Uncle Job said in his letter the police had an idea the thief might have come to Boston. If he's around here, I'd just like to lay hands on him, that's all.

"Yes, Larry wrote to me, too, that he was about to sail from Honolulu to Hong Kong. It does beat all how he loves to travel around. Won't he

be surprised when he hears that we have gone into the army and navy? Perhaps he'll wish he was with you or me.

"I must close now, as I've a lot to do yet, for myself and for Mr. Newell, who doesn't like to miss me, but wishes me well. I'm on leave of absence until to-morrow morning. Good-by until you write to me again, in care of the navy department here. It looks now as if our running away from Uncle Job would lead us into lots of adventures, eh?"

Ben's face broke into a quiet smile as he finished. "Good for Walter; I knew he was as patriotic as anybody. Well, I trust he comes out with shoulder straps, too, although it's hardly likely either of us will be so fortunate," he thought.

He had scarcely finished when a loud cheer from a neighboring company caught his ears. The cheer came travelling down one street after another, until it had passed through the entire regiment.

"What's it all about?" he queried of Peter Wilkens, who stood nearest to him.

"It's news from headquarters," answered the Yankee lad. "We're to start for Tampa, Florida,

to-morrow. Brigadier General Davis jest sent the word to the colonel."

"Hurrah, we're bound South at last!" burst out Ben. "If we get down to Florida, it won't be long before we're shipped to Cuba."

It was a day never to be forgotten. Perhaps some of the other regiments were a bit jealous, which was natural, yet they did not show it, and one and all joined to help those to leave get ready for the start.

It was a busy time. Suits were brushed up, guns cleaned and oiled, knapsacks packed, rations stored away, and the regimental quarters thoroughly policed or cleaned. "We'll be among the first volunteers to join the regulars," said Frank, "and we want to make the best possible showing."

It had been arranged that the regiment should take trains back to Long Island City, and there board the transport *City of Washington*, which was expected to tie up at one of the city's piers. The day dawned fairly clear, with a stiff breeze whipping out the big flag floating so proudly before general headquarters. The word of command was given, and down came two hundred tents simultaneously, and then began the task of rolling them up and

loading them with their poles on trucks for transportation to the freight cars.

"Sure an' we've lost our homes now!" cried Casey, as the canvas dropped. "It's myself is wonderin' where we'll be housed next."

"We won't want tents in Cuba, will we?" asked Peter Wilkens. "I've heard tell the rebels wear next to nothing and live out of doors."

"I reckon you'll be glad of a tent during the rainy season," put in Frank. "Why, don't you know it rains about half the year there?"

"Du tell!" ejaculated Peter. "Say, ef that's the case, mebbe it would be better for Uncle Sam to pervide umbrellas for the guns instead of bayonets."

Many of the soldiers had telegraphed to friends and relatives that they were about to depart for the South, and at the last moment visitors arrived again, to speak a final farewell and whisper words of comfort and good cheer. At five o'clock the soldiers were ready to depart, and off they started for the railroad station, the band playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and hundreds yelling and cheering at the top of their lungs.

"We're off!" shouted Ben, as the train began

to move. "Three cheers for Camp Black and the good fellows left behind!" and the cheers were given with three times three and a tiger. Soon the great camp was left behind, and they were moving onwards at the rate of forty miles an hour.

It was eight o'clock in the evening when the run to Long Island City came to an end, and the soldiers alighted. "Where's our boat?" was the first question asked. No vessel was in sight at the dock, and a deal of questioning elicited the information that the *City of Washington* was too large for the docking facilities, and was lying down the harbor, near the Statue of Liberty, on Bedloe's Island.

"I wonder if we're going to remain here all night?" questioned Ben.

"We can bunk in the freight shed," laughed Frank. "Nothing like getting used to roughing it, you know."

"I dink me I schlip off for a snooze at mine home," was Stummer's comment.

"Yes, an' git shot fer desertin'," answered Casey. "Remember, Carl, me boy, you're a U. S. soldier now, even if you are a volunteer, and must toe the mark for Uncle Sam for the next two years."

"I vos only makin' fun," grumbled Carl. "I vos

schleep on der roof of der tepot if da vonts me to. I vos chust so good a soldier twict ofer as any of dem."

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning before matters were straightened out and several ferry-boats came in, to take the regiment out to the transport. "By columns of fours — march!" came the command, and company after company went on board. "Now for a long coast trip!" said Ben to Peter Wilkens.

"I've been a-thinkin'," responded the Yankee volunteer. "Our ships are busy blockadin' Cuba. Supposin' the Spanish fleet comes sneakin' over here and lights on our transports, wot then? It's a fine lot o' prisoners they'll be a-takin' back to Spain with 'em!"

"Oh, I guess our transports will have a convoy of one or more battleships, Peter. You know the Second Massachusetts Regiment is to go along, too, on the *Vigilancia*. The authorities wouldn't let two thousand men run too much of a risk when it wasn't called for."

"Well, I dunno. I was readin' in the paper yesterday that the folks at Washington are sure thet Spanish fleet is somewhere nigh our coast.

You can lay straws on it they'll try to git even fer wot Dewey did, if they can."

"Sampson's fleet and Schley's Flying Squadron will keep a wide-open eye for them. I don't believe they'll dare to come too close to our coast, for fear of another defeat."

"Sure and the alarm of some folks is remarkable," put in Casey, with a laugh. "I know one family as owns a fine summer home at Asbury Park, along the Jersey shore. They used to spend every heated term there, but this year they're not goin', fer fear the Spanish warships will come along an' lift the roof off wid a six hundred pound shot!"

Ben joined in the laugh. "The Dons won't waste their shots in that fashion, not while there are cities and forts to fire upon, and while it costs in the neighborhood of several hundred dollars every time a big gun is discharged."

"Mine cracious, does it cost so much as dot?" burst out Stummer. "Say, I vouldn't vont to go to var mit nopody. I vould pin a peggar der first dime der gun oxploded."

"It takes money for nations to quarrel," said Ben. "I hear it is costing Uncle Sam nearly a hundred thousand dollars a day to meet expenses,

and goodness alone knows what it will cost when we reach Cuba and get to fighting. I don't see how a country like Spain can stand the drain."

"She can't," answered Frank. "She is practically bankrupt. The only way she raises money now is by going to her greatest creditors and telling them that if they don't help her out they may lose their entire investment, and hoping almost against hope those creditors are throwing good money after bad, as the saying goes."

Here the conversation dropped, for all were sleepy, and the one thought was to get a nap before day should dawn again. The trip to the *City of Washington* was soon accomplished, and then began the work of transferring the men from one vessel to the other.

"I ton't vont to fall py der vater," said Stummer to Ben, as they awaited their turn to board the transport. "I can't schwim no more as a lump of coal," and he gave a yawn, for guard duty the evening previous had made him even more sleepy than the majority. "I vish I vos home, und dot's der truth," he concluded — fatal words, as we shall soon learn.

Ten minutes later there was a rush at the gang-

plank, Ben pushing forward with the others. Stummer was just ahead of the young volunteer, his head nodding on his breast and his eyes half closed. Then came a misstep, a cracking of a light railing, and the German dropped into the waters of New York harbor. He went down almost silently, and immediately disappeared from view.

"Stummer's overboard!" cried Ben. Then the thought rushed into his head of what the fellow had said about being unable to swim. "He'll be drowned, as sure as fate," he reasoned. "But no, he shan't be — not if I can save him," and a second later he, too, was overboard, and battling bravely to reach the imperilled man.

The Germans dropped into the Waters of New York Harbor

CHAPTER XII

A RESCUE, AND WHAT FOLLOWED

ALTHOUGH Ben was not such a sailor as were Walter and Larry, his two brothers, he was a good swimmer, and in days gone by had spent many hours in the fresh and wholesome waters of Lake Erie. Consequently, he felt perfectly at home when he went under the surface, even though the water was salt, and he struck out boldly the instant he came up.

Fortunately while on the ferryboat he had divested himself of his knapsack, overcoat, and gun, and these, along with his hat, had been left behind. Thus was he free to move, and he made rapid progress in the direction in which poor Stummer was floating.

"Safe me! Safe me!" shrieked the helpless volunteer, as he threw up his arms wildly. "I can't schwim! Safe me!"

"Keep up, Stummer; I'm coming!" answered

Ben. "Don't let the water get into your mouth, whatever you do."

"Der vater —" went on the German. Then he stopped abruptly, a gurgle followed, and down he went once more, out of sight.

The scene caused Ben's heart to leap into his throat. "He's a goner!" he thought. "Oh, I must save him! I must!" And he increased his strokes to the utmost. Reaching the spot where Stummer had gone down, he peered around sharply. Nothing but the darkness of the night, lit up by the dancing rays from the ships' lights, lay along the silent waters.

Ah, what was that — a hand! Again Ben began to swim, to come up to Stummer's body a second later. He touched the hand, and in a twinkle the German volunteer had him around the neck and was hugging the youth with all the strength of his sturdy frame.

"Don't — don't grab me so tight, Stummer!" gasped Ben. "Don't — or we'll both go down!" He tried to loosen that hold, but in vain.

"I vos trown!" came in a splutter. "Safe me!" The unfortunate one was in a frenzy of despair. "Oh, Pen, Pen, ton't let me go town!"

"You — must — let — go," came in a choking voice. And then as Stummer let up a bit, Ben continued: "Catch me over the shoulder and under one arm, and keep quiet. I can easily float both of us until help arrives."

But Stummer was in too much mental distress to pay attention to what was told him, and as the swell from a passing steamboat caught the pair and engulfed them he gripped Ben again, and helpless to resist, the youth went down with the man.

What happened immediately afterward, Ben could scarcely relate. Down and down he went, until he thought he must be near the bottom of the harbor. A strange fire danced before his eyes and there was a buzzing in his ears. Stummer's clutch forced him to open his mouth, and he gulped down a quantity of salt water.

At last, feeling there was nothing else left to do, he brought up his knee and with that and his hands forced the German from him. But Stummer was on top, and when they separated, the bewildered man kicked Ben downward and came up alone.

By this time a small boat had put off from the *City of Washington*. It reached the spot just as

Stummer's head showed itself, and in a trice the half-drowned fellow was hauled on board.

"You've had a narrow shave," said the officer in charge. "Where is the other fellow?"

"I — I know me not," sputtered Stummer, as he sank down. "I leaf him py der pottom, I dink." And then he fell back, completely overcome.

"We must search for the young fellow, lads; it will never do to lose him in this fashion," went on the officer to his men, and then began a hunt lasting some time.

When Ben did come up, more dead than alive, he was close to Bedloe's Island. Far above him loomed the giant statue of Liberty Enlightening the World. He saw the statue reflected dimly against the sky and struck out for shore. After what seemed a hopeless struggle he gained a footing, and threw himself on the ground exhausted.

Morning was dawning when the small boat stopped at the island, having sought for Ben in vain. "He must be drowned," said the officer, with a grave shake of his head. Then he caught sight of Ben walking slowly towards the office at the steamboat landing. "Halt there! Is that you, Private Russell?" he called out.

"It's what is left of me," answered Ben, with an attempt at a smile. "Are you looking for me, Lieutenant Rowan?"

"I am." The lieutenant gazed at him keenly. "You look as if you'd had a hard time of it."

"Never had a harder, sir; I'm completely fagged out."

"And where were you going just now?"

"To the landing, to see when I could get a passage over to the city," answered Ben, without stopping to think how this reply might be interpreted.

"Well, I guess you'll come with me now," went on the officer, coldly.

"Certainly I will." Ben was a little puzzled by the tone of voice employed. "I was going to get a boat at the Battery to row me to the *City of Washington.*"

"Indeed!" came in a sneer. "I reckon you'll have a hard job making Captain Blank believe that yarn."

"I don't understand—" Ben stopped short. "Gracious, you don't think I was trying to desert!" he cried.

"It looks a good deal that way, Russell."

"It's not true, sir; I'll give you my word. I leaped overboard to save Stummer. He, poor fellow —"

"Stummer is safe — we picked him up over an hour ago."

"Thank Heaven for that!" returned Ben, relieved to think his comrade in arms was safe. "No, sir, I never dreamed of deserting," he continued. "Why, I'm just as anxious as anybody to get a chance at the Spaniards!"

"In that case, why did you swim away after we picked up the German?"

"Why — I — I —"

"Tell the truth, young man," and the officer looked more stern than ever.

"I was worn out — dazed — Stummer kicked me, I think — and I didn't know exactly what I was doing. When I recovered I hardly knew I was on Liberty Island."

"Well, get into the boat, and you can explain matters to your captain. I can tell you he doesn't much like the looks of things."

Still fatigued, and now sick at heart, Ben did as directed, and the sailors at the oars started for the transport without delay. Once or twice the

officer started to speak, but checked himself, and Ben asked no questions. The *City of Washington* gained, a rope ladder was thrown over the side, and all hands clambered on deck.

"Hullo, Ben, safe after all!" sang out Frank, rushing up. "I'm mighty glad to hear it."

"And so am I glad," put in Casey, with a broad grin on his honest face. "You're too fine a young sodger to make food fer fishes, so ye are!"

"Where is Stummer?" asked the youth, quickly.

"Down in his bunk, poor fellow. The doctor says unless he is kept quiet he may go out of his head. He moans about being saved all the time," answered Frank.

Captain Blank now came up, having paused to speak to the officer who had brought Ben aboard. His face was drawn and his eyes flashed fire.

"Private Russell, I did not think this of you," he said bitterly, as he pulled at his waxed moustache.

"Did not think what of me, captain? That I would leap to poor Stummer's rescue?"

"No; that you would try to get away after the fellow was hauled aboard the rowboat."

"I did not try to get away."

"Lieutenant Rowan says you did, and so do several others. If you did not, why didn't you come aboard the boat, instead of swimming for the statue?"

"I don't remember seeing the boat. I was dazed, just as I told the lieutenant."

"Your tale is weak, Russell. I knew some of the men were timid now we were actually bound for the South, but I did not think any of *my* men would desert." Captain Blank hesitated. "Russell, you may consider yourself under arrest."

"Oh, captain!" The cry came straight from Ben's heart. Under arrest! The thought was agonizing — and after his motive for leaping overboard had been so noble!

"It's no use making a scene. Sergeant Bulkley, you will take charge of the prisoner. See that he is placed under a guard of two men, in the forward part of the lower deck. I'll investigate more fully in the morning," and Captain Blank strode away.

Ben stood dumfounded, and Frank was aghast. "Great Cæsar, Ben, what does it mean?" burst from the under-officer.

"It means that Captain Blank is a — a — never mind — he's made a mistake. I am under arrest, and you are my jailer."

"But I don't want to be, Ben; it's the hardest job I ever tackled in my life," pleaded the young sergeant.

"I believe you, Frank; but it can't be helped. You must obey orders, or you'll be in disgrace, too. Where am I to go?"

"Down where they have set off a sort of lock-up. There are two soldiers there now, from other companies, accused of drinking too much."

Side by side the sergeant and his prisoner descended to the lower deck of the transport. Here resounded the sounds of hammer and saw, for the carpenters were not yet through fitting up the ship to accommodate the soldiers. Ben looked around somewhat curiously, remembering that the *City of Washington* had been lying in Havana harbor at the time the *Maine* was blown up and had assisted in the work of rescuing the survivors of that dire calamity.

"Here we are," said Frank, at length, as they halted before what was little better than a pen built of rough boards. Inside were a couple of

benches, upon each of which slept one of the other prisoners, snoring loudly.

"I'll not disturb them," said Ben, and started to rest himself on the floor, but Frank brought him a straw mattress and also his blanket and some dry clothing.

"As long as you're in my charge you shall be as comfortable as any of us," he said.

Many soldiers had gone to rest, and now the carpenters withdrew and orders were to keep quiet, so nothing more was said. With a heart as heavy as lead, Ben threw himself down and finally fell into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER XIII

TO TAMPA BY RAIL

THE loud roll of a drum within the narrow confines of the ship roused Ben with a start. He sat up and rubbed his eyes. Where was he?

For the second he could not think. Then came the full recollection of what had occurred, and again his heart sank within him. He looked around and found his fellow-prisoners just stirring.

"Don't we get anything to eat?" growled one, presently.

"No rations on board yet," answered a guard. "You're no worse off than any of the other soldiers."

"Humph! When I enlisted I didn't think Uncle Sam was going to starve me."

"And Uncle Sam didn't think you were going to get drunk," was the sharp reply. "You've disgraced our company, Walton — it's a shame."

"It was my friends — they treated too much,"

answered Walton, with a red face. "Hang treating anyway; it's all wrong. What's the captain going to do with us?"

"I don't know."

At that moment the captain in question came along. He peered into the pen, and seeing his two men awake paused. At once Walton leaped forward.

"Captain!" The word was spoken pleadingly.

"Well, Walton?"

"I — that is — say, captain, I made an awful fool of myself, didn't I?"

"You did, Walton."

"I'm not going to do it again, captain, 'pon my word of honor, I am not. It was my friends — they insisted on treating me, until I didn't know myself."

"Such friends are enemies, Walton; for under the guise of good-fellowship they have gotten you into serious trouble."

"I know it, captain; but it shall not happen again. I'll take the pledge first; yes, I will!"

"You are quite sure you'll behave yourself?"

"Positive of it, captain; try me and see," pleaded Walton, with greater earnestness than ever.

"And what of you, Harmwell?"

"I won't get drunk again, sir." The other soldier hung his head. "An old chum of mine presented me with a flask of brandy, and I was cold and drank more than was good for me before I knew it. I wish I had heaved the flask overboard — now. I didn't want to — to — disgrace our regiment."

"Your friend might as well have given you a serpent," answered the captain, who was a strong advocate of temperance. "Drunkenness is one of the worst evils the army has to contend with. Will you both promise to keep straight in the future, no matter what the temptation?"

"Yes, yes, captain," came from the pair, quickly.

"Then you may consider yourselves discharged," and after a few more words of advice, the captain walked on, and the men hurried from the pen.

Left to himself, Ben sat down on one of the benches, to give himself up to his bitter reflections. A number of his comrades of the company came up and attempted to hold conversations with him, but this the guards would not allow.

The *City of Washington* still rode at anchor, nor did she move after a supply boat had come along-

side and delivered a large quantity of stores. The rations were attacked with avidity, and it was Frank who brought Ben the best meal thus afforded.

"Captain Blank will be to see you soon," said the sergeant. "Just now he is in conference with the colonel."

"And how is Stummer?"

"Very much better."

"We haven't moved from the harbor yet," went on Ben. "What's the reason?"

"I don't know, excepting the authorities may be afraid to send us south by water. That Spanish fleet that is somewhere on the Atlantic might gobble us up."

It was towards evening that Captain Blank came down, somewhat out of breath, for he had been ashore transacting a large amount of business connected with the quartermaster's department.

"Now, Russell, we'll get at the bottom of this affair," he said, as he sat down. "Tell me your story."

In a few well-chosen words Ben did so. "I never dreamed of running away," he concluded. "My one thought was to save Stummer. I did my level best, and this is the result of it."

"Didn't you express the wish, just before you went overboard, that you might be safe in your bed at home, or something like it?"

"No, sir, Stummer said that. He was worn out and sleepy. I believe he will acknowledge it."

"Did he really tumble overboard?"

"To be sure he did. Why, he can't swim a stroke. I knew that, and that's why I jumped in after him."

"I was led to believe both of you tried to escape, and that Stummer's story that he cannot swim is false."

"The story is true — a dozen of our soldiers can vouch for it. As for myself, if I had wanted to desert, I could easily have done so in Long Island City, when I was sent up to the dock to look for this vessel."

"I know that is true."

"I don't want to desert, Captain Blank. I want to go to Cuba and make a record for myself against those Spaniards," continued the young volunteer, earnestly. "I enlisted of my own free will, and I'm going to stick it out to the end, no matter what comes."

For half a minute the captain gazed sharply

into that youthful and truthful face. It was beyond all question that Ben was not deceiving him. Slowly he held out his hand.

"I guess I was rather hasty with you, Russell," he said. "At any rate, I will let the present charge drop. If you really jumped overboard only to save Stummer, it was very noble in you. It would pain me very much to think one of my boys was trying to desert. Come." And he led the way out of the pen.

Five minutes later Ben was among his friends again, with Frank, Casey, and Peter Wilkens almost hugging him. "I knew it would come out all right!" cried the young sergeant. "The idea of arresting you for deserting! They had better arrest you for trying to get to Cuba before the rest of us."

"It was Holgait set the captain up to it," said Casey. "He doesn't like Ben, for Ben got out of the awkward squad before he did."

Holgait was one of the clerks who had joined the company the same evening Ben was passed. He was a tall, lean fellow, something of a dude, and being rich, considered himself of more importance than his comrades. "I don't see — ah — why

the captain wanted to take in those common fellows, don't you know," Ben had once heard Holgait remark to his particular chum, Montgomery Dwight. "Why couldn't we have all Wall Street chaps, and not store clerks and workingmen?" And ever after that there had been a coldness between Ben and the would-be exclusive.

"Are you sure it was Holgait?" answered Ben, quickly. "If it was, I'll go and give him a piece of my mind."

"Don't do it," urged Frank. "It will do no good, and only cause more trouble. The best we fellows can do is to let Holgait and Dwight severely alone." And Ben finally agreed.

All had become bustle and confusion on the transport, for word had just come in that the regiment was to be transferred to Jersey City, where it was to take cars on the Pennsylvania railroad south, in company with the Massachusetts troops. Knapsacks were again packed, blankets rolled, and several days' rations were dealt out to each man — a considerable additional load.

"We had a pleasant little thing happen while you were below," remarked Frank to Ben, while at work. "The Empire State Society of the Sons

of the Revolution presented our regiment with a handsome silk flag. It's enough to make every man feel proud, I can tell you that."

"May it be the first flag to wave from a Spanish stronghold," answered Ben. "And I'll do my best to place it there," he added.

It was nearly midnight ere the transport started for Jersey City, for the many cars required by the various troops could not be gotten together in a hurry. At the dock, despite the lateness of the hour, a crowd of many thousands was assembled.

"Remember the *Maine!* Hurrah!" yelled a barefooted newsboy, waving a United States flag in one hand and a Cuban flag in the other. "Three cheers for the sodgers wot is going to fight fer the single star!" There was a laugh, and the cheer which followed soon swelled into a roar.

"Going to fight for the single star?" said Ben. "That's true! *Cuba Libre!* as our island friends put it," and he shook his head enthusiastically.

The crowd did not stop at cheering. When the soldiers were in the cars, many came up to the windows, offering fruit and other delicacies. One aged lady had baked several pies and cut them into numerous small pieces, and these disappeared like

magic. Girls came, too, with flowers and other things, and in return for their gifts begged the volunteers for buttons from their coats, as keepsakes. One bright-eyed little dame, coming in empty-handed, offered a kiss for every button, and she went out with an apronful. These buttons are to-day highly treasured in many homes.

And then came the moment for starting. With a long whistle the engine moved forward a few feet, there was a wild rush on the part of those wanting to get on and those wanting to get off of the train, and then came a cheer as the engine started a second time and the long train moved out of the station yard.

"We're off!" came the cry. "We're off! Hurrah!" And the drum corps set up a loud beating.

"Poor Stummer!" said Ben; for the German had been the only one left behind, to rejoin the regiment later, should he fully recover from the shock his system had received.

"He'll be with us again soon," answered Frank. "Good-by to home. May we return victorious and as happy as we now are! Hurrah!"

Alas, poor, Frank! Little did he dream of all that was in store for himself and his friends, the

untold hardships, the fierce fighting; nor did he give a thought to those who were to be left dead and dying upon the smoky battlefield. The going away was a happy time; the return, ah, how different that was to be!

CHAPTER XIV

AMONG THE PINES OF FLORIDA

As many of my young readers must know, Tampa is situated upon the western coast of Florida, at the head of Tampa Bay and overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. Close to Tampa is Lakeland, something of a winter resort, and it was at these two places that a large number of the United States troops were assembling, while more bodies of soldiers were being rushed to Chattanooga Park in Tennessee, Falls Church, Virginia, and other places of lesser importance.

It was soon learned that Ben's regiment was to go into camp at Lakeland, and that the journey southward would occupy at least four days, so there was plenty of time in which to "take things easy," as the young volunteer expressed it. Day after day the soldier boys sat and talked and looked out of the car windows, while they hurried on, leaving Baltimore, Washington, Charleston, and other cities

behind. Soon Ben noticed it was growing warmer. "We'll soon be in the land that knows no winter," he remarked.

Whenever a stop was made a crowd would gather around, to cheer and to ask questions. It was easy at such times to procure all the newspapers desired, free of cost, and many hours were spent in reading and in digesting the somewhat mixed-up war news.

"Gracious! but these reports from the front are mighty conflicting," said Frank, once, as he threw down a sensational sheet in disgust. "Yesterday this paper said the Spanish fleet was off the coast of Venezuela; to-day it states it has been sighted near San Domingo. What is a fellow to believe?"

Ben laughed. "You are to believe that the sensational newspapers are merely guessing, Frank. They don't know any more than we do. Perhaps the government knows, but it is not letting the information out. If possible, Sampson and Schley are going to creep on Cervera's fleet and destroy it, just as Dewey did with Montojo, at Manila."

"I don't believe such a victory can be duplicated," returned the young sergeant; but he was

mistaken, as he was to learn ere the campaign in Cuba came to an end.

On arriving at Lakeland the regiment lost no time in going into camp among the odoriferous pines. Already a great number of troops had settled down there, troops commanded by Major General Joseph M. Wheeler, well known during the Civil War as one of the Confederacy's most daring cavalry leaders. Thus was the line between North and South wiped out, and blue and gray stood once more shoulder to shoulder beneath Old Glory.

"I don't know whether this is better than Camp Black or not," remarked Ben, when the regiment had been marched out to a long stretch of sand, with here and there a clump of pines. "I know one thing, and that is that it's mighty hot."

"Stopping here will temper us for a hot campaign in Cuba," laughed Frank. "What a sleepy old town Tampa appears to be! I trust they don't keep us here long."

Inside of twenty-four hours the soldier boys felt once more at home. They were encamped in the vicinity of a number of regulars, men who had seen many years of active service in the West, — at the Indian reservations and on the frontier, — and Ben

viewed these troops with interest. "They know what it is to shoot and be shot at," he said. At first the regulars sniffed at the coming of the volunteers. "They won't be able to do much," was what they said. But after a while all were on friendly terms.

It was on the third day at Lakeland that Frank came running up to Ben with a San Antonio, Texas, paper in his hand. "Here's bad news of Gilbert Pennington," he cried. "Poor fellow! and after all the hopes he had of going to Cuba."

The paper contained an account of the Rough Riders, who were getting together at San Antonio. They were composed of Western cowboys, Southwestern ranchmen and trailers, with a fair sprinkling of rich young men from the East who were known to be perfect athletes and used to horsemanship. The drilling of this body had started at San Antonio that day, near the Exhibition Hall, and half a dozen wild horses had broken away, and as a result four men had been sent to the hospital, Gilbert Pennington among the number.

"I wonder if Gilbert is seriously hurt?" said Ben, after reading the account carefully. "The newspaper doesn't say. I'll write to him at once." And he did.

The regiment had been located near Lake Morton, a small but crystal-like sheet of water, in which all the soldier boys wished to bathe. But this was not allowed; for, although there were three good wells near by, the great influx of troops might render it necessary to use the lake water for drinking purposes. With it all, however, there is no doubt but that many a dip was taken on the sly.

Ben soon found that military routine on Hempstead Plains had been easy beside what was now expected of him. Strict discipline, as it was known in the regular army, was the order of the day, and many were the marches and drills that took place. Shooting from hastily constructed intrenchment pits was also practised, and an exceedingly hot day was given over to a big sham battle. In this Ben was placed in the skirmish line, beside Casey and the foppish Gerald Holgait.

"I don't see why they want us to work like niggers in this sun," growled Holgait, lagging behind the others. "It's not something that's got to be done."

"The government wants to make good soldiers of us," answered Ben, cheerfully.

"We're good enough soldiers now."

"Sure an' the ginirals don't know that," put in Casey. "When they see you drillin' they'll take off their hats and beg your pardon for askin' — "

"None of your banter, Casey," burst out Holgait, wrathfully. "This may suit a — ah — common fellow like you, but for a gentleman like me —"

"Arrah, I'm as much of a gent as you," ejaculated Casey, his hot Hibernian blood rising, and rushing forward he tripped Holgait over into a swamp hole. "Take that for the compliment you're after payin' me."

It took Holgait several seconds to recover, and crawl from the hole, with his arm and side covered with black dirt. He spluttered a great deal and promised to have revenge not only upon Casey, but also on Ben, who had been unable to keep from laughing at the scene.

When the sham battle was at an end, Ben was exhausted, while it was found that poor Peter Wilkens, who had heretofore appeared so tough, had been prostrated and taken in charge by the ambulance corps. Peter lay in the hospital for ten days and came forth hardly the shadow of his former self.

"I used to think it wuz hard ploughin' up to hum,"

he said. "But, say, ploughin' ain't no circumstance to this sort o' thing. I'd ruther plough the stoniest field ever wuz than go through sech a fight ag'in."

"But you'll have to fight like that when we get to Cuba, Peter," returned Ben. He had been down to town on a pass and had brought the sufferer some fruit.

"I suppose so, Ben; but then that will be real fightin', an' the risk you run will keep a fellow up."

During these days in camp, news was received that the dreaded Spanish fleet whose whereabouts had been unknown had been located in the harbor of Santiago de Cuba. Upon learning of this, the authorities made instant preparations to blockade Santiago, just as Havana was being blockaded, and some of our heaviest warships were hurried hither, to do the Spanish fleet battle should it attempt to come out.

"Why don't our battleships go into the harbor for them, just as Dewey did at Manila?" remarked Frank, on hearing the news.

"I asked Captain Blank the same question," answered Ben. "He says the harbor is eight miles long, and the entrance is very narrow and crooked, so that only one ship could go in at a time and that

very slowly. Right at the entrance, behind a strong wall of rocks, stands Morro Castle, a first-class fortress, and the guns there could blow any vessel that tried to go in clean out of the water."

"In that case Sampson, Schley, and Watson will have to reduce Morro Castle before anything else can be done."

"Yes; unless Cervera's fleet comes out to do them battle, or escapes before the blockade is strong enough to hold him."

"I've heard something of our going to Santiago instead of Havana," went on the young sergeant. "I wonder if it's true?"

"Perhaps; the war department is not going to give its plans away, though. I learned yesterday that all the news from here to the newspapers has been cut off. That certainly means something."

"That was done partly because the newspaper men printed a report of the *Gussie* sailing for Cuba with stores and arms for the insurgents. The Spaniards found it out, and, as a consequence, the expedition proved a failure. Of course folks want the news, but I don't think they ought to have it if it is going to seriously interfere with the war board's plan of operation."

Major General Miles, commander of the United States Army, was now expected daily. Many of his staff had already arrived, including General William R. Shafter, a man of notable executive ability, who, later on, was placed in charge of the Cuban expedition.

"Shall we ever get off?" Such was the question which went the rounds day after day, as the soldiers lay out in the hot sun, or withdrew to their tents during the heavy tropical showers. The waiting was a fearful strain, and more than one desertion occurred, for with nothing to do men grew homesick. Many of the officers put up at the luxurious hotels, and passed the time much more pleasantly in consequence, yet they, too, wanted to move. This was what was afterwards facetiously designated as the "rocking-chair" period of the war. But the wait was unavoidable, for to move an army to Cuba necessitated the use of many ships, and suitable vessels could not be procured at a moment's notice.

CHAPTER XV

AN UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE

"WELL, if this doesn't beat the nation! Hurrah for Larry! He has done more than either Walter or myself!"

It was Ben who spoke, rushing up to Frank with a letter in his hand as he did so. "Here's news from my youngest brother, all the way from Hong Kong," he went on, his eyes shining proudly. "He was at Manila with Dewey, — just think of that!"

"What!" ejaculated Frank. He had heard all about Larry and Walter. "Let's see the letter, — if it's not of a private nature," and receiving it he devoured it almost as anxiously as Ben had done. "Your brother is a — a brick!" he said, enthusiastically. "He's had a pile of adventures, too, — lost on the ocean and cast away on an island with that old sailor. It's a wonder he didn't remain with Commodore Dewey."

"He wanted to find out about his ship and about the fellow who heaved him overboard, I reckon, Frank. He says he doesn't know whether he'll go back to the Asiatic Squadron or not. And this letter was written a month ago, too. He's back or on his way to the States long before this."

The letter was a thick one of over twenty pages, and in it Larry had recounted all those wonderful happenings as set forth in "Under Dewey at Manila." Ben had to read the letter several times, and then he passed it to Casey and the others, and it even went up to Captain Blank and Colonel Downs, the new commandant of the regiment. Every one was interested in reading about that great conflict on the other side of the world.

"You Russell boys are all in this war," laughed Frank. "I suppose Walter is already on the *Brooklyn* and after Cervera."

The communication from Larry impressed Ben deeply. If his youngest brother could do so much, he must look to his colors. "I'll do my level best," he murmured. "And if honors are to be won, I'll come out with shoulder straps, or know the reason why." And after that many

a spare moment, which had formerly been idled away, was spent in studying infantry tactics and a guide to the duties of officers.

The transports for the troops were now coming into the harbor, several new ones every day, until there was a fleet of them. Some were in proper trim for sailing and some were not, and all day long came the sounds of workmen on board, while immense quantities of army stores also arrived.

At Tampa, Ben came into contact with a number of Cubans, the first he had seen. They were not an active set, and seemed much depressed in spirits, although very polite. "I suppose a good many of them have lost their homes and they hardly care what happens next," he thought, and he was more than half right.

On the day previous to going aboard the transport which was to receive their regiment, Ben and Frank obtained permission to pay a visit to the town. Frank had just received a remittance from home, and Ben had some of his last wages left, and both intended to expend their money in the purchase of some necessary articles of wearing-apparel, and in a first-class dinner, — "The last we'll most likely get for a long time to come," as Frank put it.

On account of the encampment, the town had filled up with peddlers, sharpers, and rough characters, and it was with some difficulty that they made their way to a furnishing store and procured what was wanted. This done, they set out to hunt up a restaurant where a good meal might be had at a reasonable price.

"This looks all right," said Ben, halting before a modest-looking place, and pointing to an oilcloth sign which read as follows: —

SOLDIERS' REST

A First-class Dinner for 50 Cents

Three Courses, including Pie and Coffee

"Let's go in," said Frank. "I haven't had pie in a month, and I've lost all knowledge of how a course dinner tastes." And they entered and took a seat at a rear table.

A colored waiter soon came forward. "Your order, gents, if you please."

"Bring on your course dinner," returned Frank, and Ben nodded to signify he would have the same. Soon the waiter returned with a big bowl of soup for each.

"Creation! but it's mighty peppery," observed Frank, as he smacked his lips. "Must have let slip the cover of the pepper box when they seasoned it."

"It's as good as the half-cooked stuff we had last week, Frank. The meat is fresh, too."

The soup was not yet finished when the waiter came back. "Will you gents have any roast beef and any fried sweet potatoes?" was his next question.

"Now I'm with you!" cried Ben. "Sorry I almost filled up on that soup," he added to his chum. "Roast beef always did hit me just right."

"And sweets are my especial favorites."

The additional dishes were not long in coming, and the two pitched in with renewed vigor. "I shall recommend this restaurant to all of the other boys. The proprietor is about the only man around here to give a fellow his money's worth," observed Frank.

"Will you gents have any peas or beans?" It was the waiter again; and Frank and Ben winked at each other. "Both, please," came in unison, and the colored man went off, but there was an odd look on his ebony-like face. The peas and beans were

almost too much for the young soldiers, but, determined not to "miss a good thing," as Ben expressed it, they stowed away a fair portion of the vegetables.

"The man who runs such a restaurant as this ought to have a monument erected to his memory when he dies," went on Frank, and then he ordered his pie and coffee, and these things were brought for both.

They had about finished; and Ben had just made some remark about "feeling about ready to burst," when the waiter came up with a check for each. Both gave a look, and both uttered a cry of dismay.

"What's this — a dollar and fifteen cents!" gasped Frank. "Why, I only had a course dinner at fifty cents."

"No, sah, beg pardon, sah," answered the waiter, politely but firmly. "The course dinner is soup, pie, and coffee, sah."

"Well, I never!" returned the young sergeant. "You say three courses on your bill-board outside."

"Yes, sah — three courses — soup, pie, and coffee."

"It's a swindle," put in Ben, firmly. "We said we wanted a course dinner, and I want a check for fifty cents."

"Can't give it to you, sah. You had a course

dinner at fifty cents, and roast beef, sweet potatoes, peas, and beans, making exactly sixty-five cents extra."

"Ha! ha! a good joke, by Jove!" came from near by; and turning, Ben and Frank saw Gerald Holgait and his crony, Montgomery Dwight, sitting at a neighboring table.

"Very good joke," drawled Dwight. "I rather think they haven't money enough to pay with, though."

The remark made Ben's cheeks burn. "I have all the money I need, Dwight," he said. "I'll not thank you to insult me."

"Oh, don't get on a high-horse, Russell. If you've got the money, pay your bill and drop it."

"I will pay my bill — when I am ready."

"Yes, — and you can keep your mouth shut about it," added Frank; and not daring to say more, since Frank was a sergeant, Montgomery Dwight turned again to the fried chicken setting before his plate. "The common beggars!" he muttered to Holgait, and the foppish one squinted his eye in token of assent.

Leaving their table, Ben and Frank marched up to the desk where sat the proprietor of the res-

You shell out, and be precious quick about it Page 153

taurant, a thin-faced, grasping-looking individual. "We want to settle our bill," said Ben. "We ordered a course dinner, but your waiter brought us extras, and now he wants us to pay for them."

"Well, you expect to pay for extras, don't you?" was the question put.

"Not unless they are mentioned as extras."

"Indeed? Well, I reckon you will pay. I'm not running this restaurant for fun."

By this time Frank had a silver dollar in his hand. "There is your dollar for two dinners," he said, flinging it on the desk. "You'll get no more out of us. Come, Ben." And he caught his chum by the arm.

As quick as a wink the man was over the desk and had Frank by the arm. "I'm a Westerner, and I'm handy with a gun," he cried. "You shell out; and be precious quick about it."

He thought he could intimidate the pair, but he was mistaken. Both stood their ground, and Ben caught the hand that held Frank.

"You let my friend alone," he said in a clear, cold tone. "Let him alone, I say." And he pulled the hand back.

"You'll pay up or I'll have you arrested," blus-

tered the restaurant keeper. "I just saw a policeman pass."

"He won't dare to arrest us," answered Frank. "If he should, I'll refer our case to General Shafter, if needs be, and expose you. Your manner of serving people is not fair."

"I know my own business best. You'll pay — "

"Not another cent. Now let us pass."

Ben and Frank moved for the door. The restaurant keeper was in a rage, yet there was something in those two pairs of steady eyes which daunted him. In another second the chums were outside, and the man went back to his desk. "Hang it, the trick don't work on all of 'em!" he muttered, and threw the dollar in his cash drawer. The waiter had wisely withdrawn to the vicinity of the kitchen.

"What a sell!" burst out Frank, when they were out of hearing. "I'll wager he has roped in many a poor fellow looking for a square meal at a moderate price."

"I'm going to fix up his sign for him," answered Ben, bringing out a heavy lead pencil. Returning unobserved to the front of the restaurant, he crossed out the word "including" and substituted the word "Soup," so that the sign read: "A First-class Din-

ner for 50 Cents. Three courses, — Soup, Pie, and Coffee."

Frank laughed heartily. "Good for you. The sign now tells the exact truth." The change was not noticed by the restaurant keeper for the rest of the day, and he wondered how it was that his patronage fell off so greatly.

CHAPTER XVI

OFF FOR CUBA AT LAST

"Dree cheers for der Seventy-first! Of I ain't glad to git pack py der poys, den I ton't know noddings!"

Carl Stummer had reached Tampa by rail that morning and had lost no time in making his way to the spot where his company was breaking camp. A crowd instantly surrounded him, and everybody wanted to shake hands, for the good-natured German volunteer was well liked.

"Yah, I vos as glad as I can pe to git me pack," went on Stummer. "Vere is Pen Russell?"

"Here I am, Stummer." And the youth pushed his way forward. "I'm glad to see you have said good-by to the hospital."

"Oh, Pen! Pen! you safed mine life!" burst out the German, and tears stood in his blue eyes. "And den to dink da arrested you for tryin' to desert! Da vos grasy! You vos von prafe poy —

some tay you vill pe a captain, and den I vill say to dem, 'See, dot is der feller vot safed mine life alretty and nefer treamed of running away.'" And he almost hugged the young volunteer.

Even Captain Blank was glad to see Stummer back. The fellow always had a pleasant face, even when he grumbled, and had brightened up many a weary evening around the camp-fire by telling funny stories and by singing songs in his native language. He and Casey had been voted "a team" long ago.

"Me darling Stummer!" was the way the Irishman expressed himself. "The saints be blessed that I'm not to go to your funeral just yet. It's ourselves will kill a whole regiment of Spaniards as soon as we land in Cuby, ain't that so now?" And Stummer nodded and smiled more than ever.

News had arrived in camp which set all tongues to speculating upon what would happen next. Since the Spanish fleet had been located in Santiago Bay fierce fighting had been indulged in between the American warships and the enemy's forts in that vicinity, and now, having reduced the fortifications at Guantanamo, a body of marines from the battleship *Oregon* had effected a landing on the coast and hoisted the American flag. The marines num-

bered but forty, yet they held their ground against several companies of Spaniards until six hundred marines from another of our ships came to reenforce them.

"We've got a foothold in Cuba now!" cried Ben, enthusiastically. "Hurrah for the first fellow to fly Old Glory down there!"

"Where is Guantanamo?" questioned Frank. "I must say my knowledge of Cuba is a bit hazy."

"Guantanamo is a small town located on a bay of the same name, not many miles east of Santiago Bay, on the southeast coast of Cuba, Frank. It's quite an important point from the fact that the railroad running westward through the island starts from that locality."

"I see. More than likely, then, since the railroad is there and we've got a foothold at that point, all our troops will be rushed to that vicinity."

"Exactly. I'll tell you what I think, — the warships are to bombard Santiago from the front, while we are to land at Guantanamo and come up to Santiago in the rear. Thus the place will be caught between two fires and will have to surrender, — and then it will be a case of give up or come out

of the harbor and fight, for Cervera's fleet," concluded Ben.

At last came the hour for the brigade to go aboard the troopships assigned for that purpose. It was a busy scene, for many things were to be done, and there was no telling how long the voyage was to last or what might befall on the trip. In addition to the fleet "bottled up" in Santiago harbor, the Spanish had a number of other war-vessels, now lying in European waters, and it was not known but that these might swoop down on the outgoing flotilla and force a tremendous battle at sea.

The troopships and baggage transports numbered thirty-two, all large vessels with the single exception of a schooner, which was towed along, filled with drinking-water, for water must be had, and there was small space to stow it elsewhere. On board each ship every available corner was fitted up with a pine cot and a mattress, that the soldiers might have resting-places during the nights. Yet during that blazing hot spell which came upon the ships while at sea, many a man was willing to sleep on the bare deck, or go up into one of the tops for a breeze.

When the flotilla swept out of Tampa Bay it was

accompanied by a guard of five warships, but at Key West the guard was increased to fourteen warships, — a fleet in itself, — ready to do battle to the death with any enemy which might attempt to attack, by shot or shell, the almost helpless transports.

The embarkation was a sight never to be forgotten. The expedition numbered about eight hundred officers and sixteen thousand enlisted men. Of the latter the greater part were from the regular army, only three volunteer organizations being included, the Seventy-first New York and the Second Massachusetts Infantry, and the First Volunteer Cavalry, popularly known as Roosevelt's Rough Riders, although Theodore Roosevelt was but the second in command of that dashing and daring body of horsemen.

The coming of the Rough Riders was a delight to Ben, and he looked eagerly for Gilbert Pennington. Soon he saw his friend's well-known face, and ran to greet Gilbert.

"How sunburnt you are!" cried each, and then both laughed. "Yes, I was in the hospital, but not much hurt," went on Gilbert, in answer to a question from Ben. "I've got a big scar on my left arm, but it was only a flesh wound, and if I

don't have anything worse than that happen to me down in Cuba I'll count myself lucky."

"I wish we could go together," said Ben. "But I know that cannot be. Perhaps we'll meet on the battlefield."

"To be sure." Gilbert paused. "I'm sorry for one thing. The transports are so crowded that they can't take our horses, so our first journey on Cuban soil will have to be made on foot, even if we are a cavalry company. Phew! but our boat is packed like a sardine can."

"We are no better off," put in Frank, who had come up and shaken hands. "But never mind; war isn't intended to be a picnic."

It had been expected that the vessels would leave at once after the soldiers were on board, but for various reasons the expedition was delayed twice, and it was not until Tuesday, June the 14th, that a final start was made from Key West.

"My! what a mighty army there is of us!" exclaimed Ben, as he stood on the deck, the morning of the second day at sea. "Why, there are nothing but vessels as far as one can see. It looks as if New York harbor was on the move, only the little steam tugs are missing."

The flotilla moved along in columns of threes, spreading out a distance of several miles, and around the troopships and supply boats steamed the grim warships, continually on the lookout for the enemy, and delivering orders through large megaphones, which Peter Wilkens declared "wuz the largest fish-horns" he "ever see."

The speed of the flotilla was not great, since it was desirable to keep all the vessels together. The schooner with water set the pace, and although many fretted and fumed during the hot days and suffocating nights, this pace could not be changed.

"I didn't enlist for such — ah — abominable treatment as this," grumbled Gerald Holgait, as he stamped around the sleeping quarters. "I haven't a washbowl to wash in; my comb is gone, and — "

"How about your moustache wax?" put in Casey. "Sure and that's most important of all, ain't it now?" And a laugh went up.

"I want no insult from you," roared Holgait, red in the face. "I — I am a gentleman, and I expect Uncle Sam to treat me like one."

"Oxactly," put in Stummer. "Ve vill haf von glass case made for you ven ve reach Cuba, und you can sthay in dot vile ve does der fighting, hey?"

"You shut up, Dutchy! I am a gentleman, and if you can't appreciate the feelings of a gentleman, you had better — oh!"

Gerald broke off and began to splutter. Frank, passing along with a bucket of water, had slipped on the rolling deck, and bumped up against Holgait, and a large part of the water had found its way over the dude's breast and down his neck.

"You — you villain!" gasped Holgait as soon as he could recover. "You did that on purpose!"

"No, I did not, Holgait. The ship rolled and —"

"I say you did. I — I shall report you to Captain Blank for it."

At this another laugh went up. The idea of such a trivial occurrence being reported! Even Frank smiled. "All right; go ahead," he said.

"You and Russell think you can lord it over me, but you can't," went on Holgait, catching sight of Ben behind Frank. "You two think you are the king-pins of the company."

"That's it exactly," said Montgomery Dwight. "The pair make me sick, and so do that Irishman and that Dutchman. I don't see why they were allowed to enlist with us."

At this Casey blazed up. "Montgomery Dwight, I consider meself as good a man as you, even if I haven't the money you have," he cried. "I am willing to go to the front and fight to the last drop of me blood for Uncle Sam. More than that no man can do."

"Hurrah for Casey!" came in a shout. "That's the talk. Don't let the dudes walk over you, Dan."

"It ist easy to talk now; let us see how der tally stands after der first fight ist ofer," put in Stummer. "I dink dot vill speak for itself. A chentleman ain't no coward."

"I can fight as well as any of you," grumbled Holgait. "Just show me the Spaniards, and I'll show you all what a real gentleman can do. Come, Mont; don't waste time on such cattle." And arm in arm the pair hurried away to the deck.

"I don't see how fellows can make themselves so disagreeable," remarked Ben to Frank. "I don't believe they have a friend in the regiment."

"Holgait inherited a small fortune last year, and that has turned his head, Ben. He thinks money is everything. As a matter of fact, when it comes to drilling, he is one of the poorest soldiers we have, and Dwight is little better."

"I wish I was to have nothing more to do with either of them," answered Ben; but his wish was not to be gratified. However, he saw but little of either of the dudes during the remainder of the voyage, for both were that afternoon taken with seasickness in its most violent form and sent to the "sick bay" of the troopship.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LANDING AT BAIQUIRI

THE island of Cuba, the "Queen of the Antilles," is the largest of the West Indies, and is not quite eight hundred miles long, by from forty to a hundred and thirty miles wide. It is of volcanic origin, and the Copper Mountains range throughout its entire length, with one peak, Pico Turquinos, rising to an altitude of 7750 feet above sea-level.

In centuries gone by the island had been inhabited by peaceful Caribs and by Indians, but in the year 1511 the Spanish sent a conquering expedition from Hayti, and from that time on, through centuries of cruelty, theft, religious persecution, and rebellion, Cuba remained a Spanish colony, the richest possession, with the possible exception of the Philippines, of the mother country.

The present war between the Cubans and Spain was not the first waged for independence. Time and again had the oppressed ones sought to throw

off the yoke which galled so deeply, only to be put down by that iron hand which knew no mercy but which was extended only to grasp whatever of money the Cubans could be made to pour into it. Nor was it the first time that Americans had tried to aid the Cubans. At least twice did Yankee filibusters join with the Cubans. But this was done without authority and was frowned upon by our government.

As mentioned by Ben, Santiago and Guantanamo lie upon the southeastern coast of the island, and it had been decided that the army now on its way to invade Spanish territory should sail through the Old Bahama Channel along the north shore, around Cape Maysi on the extreme east, and then westward along the south coast until the vicinity of Guantanamo Bay was gained. Once at the latter point, General Shafter of the army, and Admiral Sampson, commanding the warships off Guantanamo and Santiago, were to hold a council of war and decide what the next move was to be looking towards the fall of Santiago.

Day after day went by, and still the vast flotilla kept at sea, moving slowly and cautiously, always on the lookout against a surprise. At night the vessels would draw close together, and the warships,

sailing in a circle outside, would train their powerful searchlights in this direction and that, so that no Spanish destroyer might crawl up under cover of the darkness. Only once or twice was land sighted, and then it was so far off as to be seen only with the aid of a glass.

"I'll be glad enough to put foot on shore again," remarked Ben, one hot night, as he and Frank crawled up the rigging to get a breath of fresh air. "Casey calls this ship a baker's oven, and I reckon he's about right."

"Two of the boys of the other companies fainted to-day from the heat," answered Frank. "Poor chaps! I saw them both. The surgeon said it was doubtful if one of them got over it. I think we are fixing for a rain." And Frank was right; it rained soon after — a most welcome shower.

It must not be supposed that all matters relating to the war were allowed to rest while the army of invasion was on its journey, for such was far from being the case. The marines landed at Guantanamo had a hard time of it to hold the footing they had gained, and to keep a large force of Spaniards from going to the scene of these conflicts, Admiral Sampson began to bombard the outer defences of

Santiago, thus directing Spanish attention mainly to that territory. This gave the navy some hot work to do, as we shall learn when we follow the adventures of Ben's brother Walter.

It was a little after ten o'clock of a clear morning that a cry rang from one ship to another which caused all of the soldiers to seek the decks.

"The blockading fleet is in sight! We're coming up to Santiago!"

"Hurrah!" cried Ben, throwing up his hat in delight. "This trip is about ended."

"And now for some real fighting!" added Frank. "How is it, Ben? Do you feel nervous?"

"Not a bit of it," was the truthful reply. "It's only this waiting that sets my nerves on edge. Oh, look, Frank, what a fine cruiser is approaching. I wonder what warship it is?"

"That is the *Brooklyn*," answered Captain Blank, who stood close by, marine glasses in hand. "I know her very well. She is Commodore Schley's flagship."

"The *Brooklyn!*" Ben's heart gave a bound. "I wonder if Walter is on board? He wrote that he was going to try to get on her."

The cruiser that had appeared was soon followed

by another, and then orders were signalled for the troopships and freight boats to come to a standstill, which they did in a bunch, forming a perfect forest of masts.

And then what a yelling broke loose! The navy that had waited so long for the coming of the transports cheered for the soldiers, and the soldiers cheered in return, and more than one gun and pistol went off, "in a sort of Fourth of July celebration," as Ben expressed it afterward. It was a great time all around, and everybody felt that, now the soldiers had come, Santiago was doomed, and Cervera's fleet must fight or surrender.

The joy was not confined to the ships. Soon the news travelled to the marines at Guantanamo and to the half-starved and wretched Cuban troops under General Garcia, and these made hills and valleys ring with their shouts of delight. "The war is over, and Cuba is surely free," the old Cuban general is reported to have said, when, on climbing a hill overlooking the ocean he had seen that mighty fleet of vessels, loaded with Uncle Sam's troops, sweeping shoreward. "Our deliverers have come; no Spanish troops can withstand them."

Upon arriving off Santiago, General Shafter's

first movement was to hold the proposed interview with Admiral Sampson, after which both went on shore with their escorts, at a small place called Aserradero, where they met General Garcia, to learn what he was able and willing to do regarding the campaign then opening.

The Cuban general's headquarters were found to be nothing more than a wretched native hut, and it was soon apparent that the Cuban army, as it then stood, could give but poor aid at the best. "Furnish us with guns, ammunition, and rations, and we will battle to the bitter end," was what our commanders were told, and the articles asked for were promised the insurgents.

It was at this interview that General Shafter outlined the movements he intended to make on land. The troops were to begin disembarking at Baiquiri, on the 22d of June, and, in order to cover up this operation, the Cubans were to attract the attention of the Spaniards by a feint at Cabanas, some miles away, while our navy was to shell several places along shore. A number of transports were to get behind the warships, to give the Spaniards the idea that a landing was proposed at some other point than the real one. Once on land, the

army was to move to the west and northwest, driving the Spanish outposts before it, until Santiago itself was reached.

Baiquiri was a small settlement on the coast, lying between Santiago Bay and the Bay of Guantanamo. The landing here was made at an elevated dock, partly burned by the Spaniards ere they retreated. All the small boats of the troopships were called into play, and many of the smaller craft of the navy assisted. These carried the soldiers and camp stores. What there were of horses were made to leap overboard and swim to a sandy beach some distance beyond the settlement. It was found impossible to get off all the troops at Baiquiri, and, later on, a number were landed at Siboney.

"What a racket!" observed Ben, when the big warships broke loose along the shore, to attract the attention of the Spaniards. The navy was covering half a dozen points at once, including the real landing-place, and the dull booming of the cannons was incessant. "I'd give a good deal to know if Walter is helping along with this work."

"That landing is not going to be so easy," said Frank, who was watching the shore with a marine glass borrowed from a ship's officer.

Directly in front of Baiquiri was a rough, rocky coast, and behind the settlement arose a range of hills. Here the Spaniards had built a fort and hoisted their flag. The flag was seen when the troopships came into the harbor, but on the day of the landing the Spaniards, alarmed by the Americans in front and the Cuban troops behind, evacuated the stronghold and fled towards Juragua, to the westward, leaving a trail of burning huts behind them.

Among the first troops to land were the Rough Riders, and, it may be added here, these daring cavalrymen were among the first to do battle in the attack on Santiago.

As boat after boat reached the shore a good-natured rivalry arose as to who should be the first to land, and many a tumble and wetting was had. On leaving the dock the soldiers were quickly formed into companies and marched forward into Baiquiri proper, some distance back of the landing, and then General Lawton threw out a strong detachment on the Santiago road westward, and another detachment among the hills to the north and east. The main body of the troops was quartered in the houses of the settlement and in the buildings of an

iron company. All the natives had fled, but towards night some of them came back, timid and frightened, to become our soldiers' best friends.

In the morning the march was taken up from Baiquiri to Juraqua, and at La Guasima the Spaniards made their first stand, against two squadrons of the regular cavalry and two squadrons of Rough Riders. The fighting was sharp and fierce, and many a brave soldier laid down his life for his flag. Gilbert Pennington was in the thickest of this encounter, and how the gallant Southern lad fought and suffered will soon be related in detail.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN ENCOUNTER ON THE TRAIL

"My, oh my! but this is hot!"

"Hot doesn't do it justice, Ben — it's scorching, in spite of the heavy dew we had last night."

"Sure, sergeant, and I'm all scratched to pieces, so I am, wid thorns on one side and stickery vines on the other," put in Casey, as he shifted the heavy load he carried from one shoulder to the other. "I'm strongly tempted to throw this stuff away."

"I dink I vould chust as kvick fight dem Spaniards as dravel drough dis voods," remarked Stummer, who came plodding on behind the trio. "Von minit I stumbles on a sthone, der next I vos gone down py a mud-hole alretty. Of dis keeps on, I durns me into a pack-mule, hey?"

The regiment had landed at last, and under orders from General Kent, the division commander, was moving along a tortuous mountain road leading westward. At places the road was little more

than a trail, with sharp rocks and hills on one side, and a perfect jungle of tropical vegetation on the other.

The heavy dews of the night, combined with the recent rains, had made the ground soggy and uncertain, and the unclouded sun, rising higher and higher, filled the air with a steamy sultriness which was depressing in the extreme.

It was the intention of General Shafter to push forward to the outer fortifications of Santiago with all possible speed, yet to move a body of sixteen thousand men through a strange country over roads which could not have been worse, was no easy task. Surprises by the enemy must be guarded against, food must be supplied, even if the pack train and the wagons could not get through, and less than twenty-four hours had been spent on land, when a number of the soldiers were stricken down by the dreaded tropical fever. Later on, the awful yellow fever also broke out, bringing more to death's door than did the guns of the enemy.

As Ben and his fellow-soldiers toiled along, through dense thickets and across open spots where the sun seemed ready to strike them down with its intensity, they kept a sharp lookout for Spaniards.

"Captain Blank said they had sharpshooters out," Ben remarked to Frank. "I have no desire to let one of them strike me off."

"Nor I," answered Frank. "If they — hark! That was a shot, as sure as you're born!"

Frank was right. The crack of a rifle had rung out clearly, coming from a hill to the right. A yell followed, and a colored soldier, struggling along with a load of officer's equipments, was seen to throw up his arms and pitch headlong.

The sight thrilled Ben to the heart. Was this war — this shooting down of a man in cold blood? He shuddered, and as he did so a dozen guns from among the soldiers around him spoke up.

"We've knocked him!" reached his ears. "He was up in the tree on the top of the hill." The report was true; the sharpshooter had been caught at his own game, and his body came crashing down among the bushes, to fall upon a rock in plain view.

"Yes, it's awful," said Frank, seeing the look on Ben's face. "But that Spaniard brought it on himself. I wonder if there are any more in this vicinity?"

"Look to your guns, men!" sang out Captain Blank, drawing his pistol. "And keep as close to the rocks as you can," he added a moment later.

Ben gazed at his rifle. It was not a new weapon, but it was in good condition and ready for use. He held it in front of him, his hand on the trigger. "I came here to fight, and I'm going to do my duty," he murmured, between his set teeth. "I'll fire at the first Don who shows himself."

But no more sharpshooters were in the neighborhood, or, if they were, the fate of their comrade caused them to remain quiet. Soon the vicinity of the hill was left behind, and they tramped up to the top of a small table-land, where they came to a halt for dinner, — a meagre meal of coffee, hardtack, and a tiny slice of canned meat. It was not until several days later that full rations were to be had.

When the march was resumed, it was found that the trail was growing worse instead of better, and several times some of the soldiers turned back, thinking they could go no further, and that another road must be found.

"Let us go up on the rocks," said Frank. "I believe it's better travelling up there than down here. And we'll get more air, too."

"How about sharpshooters?" questioned Ben, hesitating. "I don't want to be picked off."

"Oh, I don't believe there are any up here, Ben;

come on." And the two young volunteers branched off as Frank had desired.

To ascend the rocks was not easy, and more than once they had to haul themselves up by bushes and trailing vines. The vines grew everywhere, scores of feet in length, and often so thick, it was impossible to break through the meshes thus formed. On every side were gorgeous flowers, and the hum of insects was incessant.

"I reckon nature just lets things grow to suit themselves here," laughed Frank, after a tussle with a number of the vines. "I never saw such rank vegetation in my life."

On went the pair, sometimes but a hundred feet from their companions, and then completely out of sight. The table-land had been left behind, and another hill rose before them.

Frank was slightly in advance, but now Ben ranged up beside him. "We are coming to a gully," began the young sergeant, when his feet slipped from under him and down he went, amid a mass of rolling stones and a crashing and tearing of bushes and vines. "Oh, look out!" he yelled; but it was too late, for Ben was coming down on top of them. Over and over rolled both, to bring

up at last with a thud against a fungus-covered rock, and in utter darkness.

"Ben, — are you — you hurt?"

"N–no, but — my — wind is about gone."

"What a tumble! We must have come clear down the opposite side of that hill we were travelling."

"Yes, but I didn't see any edge," answered Ben, as he arose slowly to his feet and shook himself, to ascertain if any bones had been broken. "The brush hid everything ahead from view."

"I guess I'm all right, although I'm scratched in about a thousand places," went on the young sergeant. "This is going to war with a vengeance. We'll have to climb up that hill again, somehow."

"You had better say somehow," was Ben's rueful response. "Where are we? It's so dark I can't see a thing."

"We've dropped into a hollow, I imagine. That is nothing but dense brush overhead. What a glorious bears' den."

"Are there bears in Cuba?"

"Never heard of any. But there are wild boars, and they are nearly as bad. Got your gun?"

"Yes, but my pack is gone."

"So is mine. They must be clinging somewhere up on the rocks. It's a blessing the guns didn't go off and kill one or the other of us. Better let down the hammer for the present."

Feeling the soil sloping upward to their left, the two unfortunates moved slowly and cautiously in that direction, until they encountered the brush Frank had mentioned. It was a perfect jungle, and five minutes of struggling brought them to a pause.

"We're booked to stay here," panted Frank. "It's a pity we didn't keep to the regular trail."

"Never say die, Frank. We found a way into the hole and must find a way out. Let us go back a bit and try it in some other direction."

"All right. I don't wonder those Cuban soldiers are in rags. Just look at my outfit." And Frank pointed to his clothing, torn in a score of places. "Three months of this would leave a chap without a stitch to his back."

They retraced their course, and struck out as Ben had indicated. Here, fortunately, the vines were less numerous, and by cutting down a portion of the brush with their pocket-knives, they at last forced a passageway to a clearing beyond, where they came

into sight of a well-defined trail running northward.

"We're out of that, thank goodness!" cried Frank. "But what about this path? It doesn't look as if it would bring us back to where we started from."

"I think it winds to the westward further on," answered Ben, after a careful survey. "And as it's the only path in sight, let us try it for half a mile or so."

They pushed on, and finding walking easy, made rapid progress. The half-mile and more was covered, and Ben called a halt beneath a tall mahogany tree.

"We're getting farther and farther away from our regiment, I feel certain of it," he said. "And that's bad, considering we are in the heart of the enemy's country."

"Well, I'm sure I don't know what to do, Ben. Do you advise going back?"

"Hardly; for we can't cross the top of that hill through the jungle. What is worse, night is coming on, and if we don't look out we'll lose ourselves completely."

"As if that wasn't the case already." Frank

threw himself on the thick grass to rest. "I must confess I'm stumped."

As tired as his chum, Ben also dropped on the sward. But not for long. Suddenly a tramping on the trail ahead of them was heard, and four rough-looking, dark-skinned, and dirty soldiers came into view, each armed with a Mauser rifle, the favorite Spanish weapon.

"*Alto! Quien va!*" (Halt! Who goes?) came from the leader of the quartette, and then, as Frank and Ben leaped to their feet, the four Mausers were pointed at their heads.

At this one after another of the Cubans shrugged their lean shoulders. A talk followed in Spanish, of which neither of the American boys understood a word.

"We think Spanish sharpshooters on dis trail," said the leader, presently. "You stay wid us till morning and we take you to your friends. We have other *Americano* — over in house. He shot yesterday. You come see him."

Evidently the four Cubans were well-meaning fellows, and having no inclination to fall in with the sharpshooters mentioned, Ben and Frank decided to accept the invitation to put up at the house which had been spoken of, and at which a soldier who had been wounded was stopping. "We may be able to do something for the poor fellow," said Ben.

The Cubans led the way almost directly into the brush and then over a stony road westward. As they tramped along Ben questioned the leader and managed to learn that his name was Jorge Mandona, that he was an under-officer in the Cuban army, and that he frequently carried despatches for General Garcia.

"Me carry letters for Antonio Maceo when he live," said Mandona. "Maceo great man. If he

not shot, Santiago be ours long ago." And Ben found out, later on, that such was the prevailing opinion among the insurgents in the eastern section of the island. To them, General Antonio Maceo, shot down in battle the year before, was the most daring leader and the greatest patriot the world had ever seen.

It was sunset when the party arrived in front of a long, low house, built of logs and thatched with palm leaves and half a dozen ill-smelling sheepskins, turned hair side downward, — the skins being placed there not only to shed the water when it rained, but also to attract, by their odor, the numerous flies which swarmed about, thus ridding the dwelling of the larger portion of those pests. The house was set in the midst of a clump of grenadilla trees and boasted of a door and several windows, all of which were wide open to admit the air.

"Not a very inviting place —" began Ben, when he caught sight of the wounded American soldier sitting in a grass hammock slung from the door-post to a near-by tree. "Gilbert Pennington! or am I dreaming?" he burst out.

"Ben! By all that's fortunate!" was the answer, and Gilbert slipped to the ground and came

forward. Ben noticed at once that he carried his left arm in a sling, and that he looked exceedingly pale. "Oh, yes! I got nipped first crack," he said.

"We hadn't any idea you were here," said Frank, and a handshaking all around followed. "Tell us how you got shot."

"It was in the tanglewood at that place they call La Quasima," answered Gilbert. "The Rough Riders (that never rode at all) were coming along in double file, and every man of us wide awake for enemies, when all of a sudden the Dons opened up on us from I don't know where, and knocked over three men all in a minute. We were taken a bit by surprise, but we gave it to 'em as good as they sent, and the cracking of our guns and the popping of their infernal Mausers became incessant. But they had the best of it, for they used smokeless powder, and we didn't, and whenever they saw a puff of smoke they knew just where to aim."

"But you didn't retreat—" began Ben.

"Retreat? Not much—we didn't come away down to Cuba to retreat before a lot of those garlic-eaters. As soon as the first shock was over, we got orders to deploy into the brush, and we soon got

behind the Spaniards and got them on the run, and then they cleared out as fast as they could; and the way was cleared for you people."

"But what of this arm of yours, Gilbert? Is it much hurt?"

"No, only a flesh wound just above the elbow. I received that after we had the Dons on the run. I ran after them for about quarter of a mile and missed my way, along with about half of our company, and I had just come to a halt when, pop! went a gun from among the trees, and I felt a sharp, stinging pain and the blood began to flow over my hand. I skipped for shelter, took off my coat, and bound up the wound as well as I could, and then tried to get back to my troop. But I lost my way in the dark, and early this morning several Cubans piloted me to this place."

"You were lucky to escape with your life," said Frank. "I understand you lost a good many men."

"Troop L suffered heavily, losing the captain and another officer, besides a number of men. I don't know what the others lost. Oh, it was a hot time while it lasted, I can tell you that!" and Gilbert threw himself into the hammock again.

"Were Colonel Wood and Lieutenant-Colonel Roosevelt with you?" asked Ben, with deep interest.

"To be sure they were, and I never saw cooler officers. Why, Roosevelt had his cheek struck by a splinter from a tree against which he was standing, and he never turned a hair. That man is a born fighter."

The Cubans were surprised to learn that the new arrivals knew the wounded soldier, and they asked Gilbert a number of questions in Spanish, for the Southerner had picked up the tongue while working around Santiago and Havana.

"They say they'll do the best they can by us," said Gilbert to Ben and Frank later. "But they want us to understand that getting back to our lines will be no easy matter. That fellow who came in a few minutes ago advises that we remain here until sunset to-morrow, and then follow a guide they will furnish to us."

"Rest here a whole day!" cried Ben. "Why, the army may be in the biggest kind of a battle by that time."

"It's not likely, Ben. The Spaniards are moving slowly but surely towards Santiago, and although we may have one or two battles out here, they

won't take any real stand until the fortifications just beyond the city are gained. On the other hand, General Shafter won't force a big fight until he has his artillery in position, and until a permanent base of supplies is established."

As there were no benches or chairs handy, and only one hammock, Ben and Frank were glad enough to throw themselves on the ground in front of the house. In the meantime, the Cubans had built a fire and were preparing a meal of meat, cooked in a pot with sweet potatoes, onions, and garlic. The garlic was very strong and not very appetizing, to Ben's opinion. Yet he was tremendously hungry, and when the mess was passed around in rude wooden bowls he declared it tasted better than it smelled.

"The Cuban can't get along without his garlic," said Gilbert, when the subject was mentioned. "He puts it into the pot no matter what else is to go in."

"Everything grows so profusely here, I should think the Cubans would raise plenty of vegetables," remarked Frank.

"They could raise them if they tried. But the average Cuban, it must be confessed, is rather lazy — or rather, the heat makes him so — and, conse-

quently, he doesn't grow any more than he actually needs. Some will grow only a few bananas, or, if they own a small grove of cocoanut trees, they make that pay their way — pulling off what cocoanuts are needed from time to time for trading at the town markets. Of course I am speaking now of the poorer classes, and they are in the majority."

"And what of the rich?" asked Ben.

"Oh, they think of only two things. In the western part of the island everything is given over to tobacco-raising, and down here everybody either has a sugar plantation with a mill attached, or else grows cane for his neighbor's mill. Of course a number are engaged in sheep-raising and other industries, like, for instance, the getting out of minerals from the mountains yonder, but such enterprises are of secondary importance."

As soon as the supper had been cooked the Cubans had extinguished the fire, and now, as night drew on, they invited the three Americans into the house. Gilbert was to have the hammock, which was slung from one corner-post to another, while Ben and Frank were given a bed of cut vines in a corner. The Cubans disposed of

themselves as they saw fit, some lying on the bare floor and some out under the trees. Three men were detailed to stand guard, and they sat facing the trail and the jungle beyond. Each of three guards was an adept at rolling cigarettes, made wholly of native, sun-cured tobacco, and as fast as one of these rolls was smoked up another was lit.

"They are all inveterate smokers," said Gilbert. "And it's necessary — to keep off the flies, mosquitoes, and other pests."

Ben was so worn out he felt certain that he would sleep "like a rock," as he told Frank. Alas! for his anticipation; hardly had he dropped into a doze than he felt a nip on one limb, then a nip on another, and then what seemed nips all over him. "Great Scott!" he muttered, and sat up. Striking a light, he saw that not only his improvised bed, but the whole flooring of the house, was alive with flees, bugs, roaches, and other crawling things which he had never before seen, and for which he could find no name. "This is the worst yet!" he cried, and shaking himself thoroughly, ran for the open air, where, a few minutes after, he was joined by Frank. Gilbert, in the hammock, was hardly molested, and slept soundly.

CHAPTER XX

A TIMELY SHOT

THE sun had not yet risen over the blue-veiled hills to the east when Ben arose from his bed under a low-spreading palm, and walked over to the fire which two of the sleepy Cubans were building. "Let me help you," he said, smiling, and began to break up the thick brush over his knee. The Cubans were willing, and both dropped back, sank on the ground, and brought forth their ever-present supply of tobacco.

"Our army won't get much assistance from these chaps," thought the young volunteer. "They mean well, but the heat and three years of guerilla warfare has taken the starch out of them. They want one or two good victories to brace them up."

"So you've turned out?" came from Frank, a minute later. He stretched himself. "Gracious! but I seem to ache in every joint."

"Don't say that, Frank, or I'll be thinking the fever has hold of you," answered Ben, in alarm. "There are enough of the poor fellows down already, without your adding to the list."

"Well, I certainly do feel odd, Ben. However, we won't anticipate evil. What's on the bill of fare for breakfast?"

Ben laughed. "No three-course meal for fifty cents, I can tell you that," he returned. "I can't ask the Cubans. We'll have to call Gilbert to do the talking for us."

"No, let him sleep, — the rest will do him more good than medicine. He's a hero, if ever there was one, and so are the rest of the Rough Riders."

It was not long before Gilbert appeared, and presently a Cuban stalked into the camp bearing a part of a sheep on his shoulder. This was speedily cut up, and after Gilbert had spoken to Jorge Mandona about the matter, the three volunteers were supplied with some mutton chops, which, broiled over the blaze, tasted delicious. Some rice cakes were also forthcoming, and these, along with some ripe plantains, made a very good breakfast. In many parts of Cuba the plantains — commonly known in our own country as bananas — are used

as a substitute for bread, being eaten not only raw, but also when cooked and baked.

The breakfast finished, the young volunteers were trying to decide what was best to do next, when a loud shout was heard, coming from down the trail. The shouting was in Spanish, and upon hearing it the Cubans leaped for their guns and their machetes; for not a one was there who did not possess one of the formidable sugar-cane knives, sharpened to a razor-like edge.

"A Spanish detachment is coming!" said Mandona to Gilbert, speaking in his native tongue. "We fly or we fight, according to the number of men."

"The Spanish!" ejaculated the young Southerner. "Boys, we are going to get into it sooner than we expected." And forgetting all about his wounded arm, he ran for his gun, and the others followed.

The shouting increased, and presently came the crack, crack of a dozen pistols, and one of the insurgents, who had just run forward from the house, was seen to fall, shot through the shoulder. "*Cuba Libre!*" he shouted fiercely, "*Cuba Libre!*" and then fainted. Such a man was one of the ill-fated isle's best patriots.

Ben raised his Gun Page 197

Ben's rifle was ready for use, and catching it up, he followed Gilbert outside, with Frank at his heels. The three Americans made their way to a thick clump of bushes, the Cubans having meanwhile scattered behind the trees.

"There they are!" came from Gilbert, as a dozen Spanish cavalrymen came into view. They were well mounted and armed, and each had his pistol in one hand and his sabre in the other.

Bang! crack! bang! The firing was heavy for a minute, and amid the clouds of smoke another Cuban fell, and two of the cavalrymen pitched from their saddles into the dust of the trail. A fierce yell followed, as both sides closed in, to strike right and left with sabre or machete, as the case might be.

Gilbert and Frank had fired, and a man and a horse were hit, but neither seriously. Ben was about to discharge his weapon, when on glancing to his right he saw a sight which filled him with horror. Jorge Mandona, who had led his followers, had slipped upon one knee, and a dismounted Spanish cavalryman was in the act of running him through with his sabre!

Without stopping to think twice, Ben raised his

gun, pointed it at the cavalryman, and pulled the trigger. Bang! went the rifle, and the Spaniard's sabre fell to the ground. The enemy had been hit in the forearm, and the Cuban was saved.

The fighting now became hotter than ever, and, reloading, the three Americans continued to shoot, meanwhile keeping well behind the brush. Gradually the Cubans were forced down the trail, and suddenly, seeing themselves greatly outnumbered by the foe, they broke and ran. The Spaniards went after them like demons, and before the skirmish came to an end several more were wounded upon each side.

"We're lucky to escape without being hit," remarked Frank, as the shouting and firing died away in the distance. "Gracious, but that was hot while it lasted!"

"My opinion is, that the quicker we get out of this neighborhood, the better it will be for us," said Ben. "There is no telling when those Spaniards will be back."

"That's true," put in the Southerner. "Let us follow that trail a short way, and then strike out westward. We are certain to fall in with some of our troops sooner or later."

In another moment they were off, Gilbert in the lead, Ben next, and Frank bringing up in the rear. They moved with caution, for they did not know but what another detachment of the enemy might be in the vicinity. Gilbert's wounded arm hurt him considerably, but the Rough Rider did not complain.

The trail now led upward, over first one hill and then another. On the top of the second eminence they paused to look about them, for here a wide expanse of country came into view.

To the north stretched along two ranges of mountains, running almost parallel to the seacoast far to the south, — mountains thickly clothed with forests of rosewood, ebony, grenadilla, fustis, cedar, oak, palms, and plantains. The under vegetation, of brush and rank grass, crowded in everywhere, as did the trailing vines and the dank tropical moss. Here and there the ground was cleared, and plantations of sugar-cane, tobacco, maize, rice, and coffee could be seen.

"I see the smoke of a village to the westward," said Ben. "What place is it, do you think, Gilbert?"

"It must be Sevilla. To the southwest, — over

there, — is Peluca. Over to the northwest is Santiago, but the hills of San Juan cut it off from view."

"And how far are we from Santiago?" questioned Frank.

"I can't say exactly, — perhaps a dozen miles, as the crow flies. The road may be twenty or twenty-five miles long."

"Look! look!" suddenly shouted Ben, pointing westward, to a valley between two of the hills. "I am almost certain I saw the glint of a company of rifles among the trees. If only I had a glass!"

Taking a stick, he pointed out the direction to his two companions, and all three trained their eyes on the spot.

"They certainly do look like guns," said Frank. "What do you think?" he continued, turning to Gilbert.

The Southerner shook his head slowly. "Perhaps; but to my mind it's nothing but the glint of a mountain torrent in the sunshine. However, if our soldiers are over there, so much the better for us. Come along." And on they went.

At the foot of the hill they came to a stream, tumbling down over a series of rocks and hedged

in with grass all of six feet high. The water looked cool and inviting, and they stopped long enough to get a drink and bathe their perspiring faces and hands.

"You want to be careful how you drink," remarked Gilbert, as Ben and Frank knelt down for that purpose. "It's not very pleasant to swallow a lizard or leech, and you'll find plenty of them around here."

"And the green flies!" cried Ben. "I thought those bugs last night were bad enough, but these flies are terrors."

"Look!" exclaimed Frank. He had arisen and was pointing across the stream. Near a big mud-hole sat a monstrous frog, or toad, squinting and blinking at them. Taking up a stone, Frank shied it at the animal, and with a vicious hiss that brought with it some dark liquid from the frog's mouth, the thing flopped into its hole and out of sight.

"Is he poisonous?" asked Ben.

"I don't believe so, although the natives say that liquid will cause a severe swelling if it touches your skin," answered Gilbert. "Forward march!" And he leaped over the stream, and the others did the same.

Finding nothing to alarm them, and the trail having turned directly westward, they kept upon the ill-defined road. It was tremendously rough in spots, and more than once one or the other had to either boost or haul up his fellows.

"One thing is certain," said Ben, as, having climbed an unusually steep hill, they threw themselves down to rest. "That Spanish cavalry never came this road."

"I've been thinking of that," returned Gilbert. "We must have passed a fork somewhere without knowing it."

"If we have, I'm glad of it," was Frank's comment. "The further we get away from the Dons, the better for us, — so long as we are not with our troops."

Eleven o'clock found them over the second hill, and on a bit of stony and somewhat barren tableland. A shower had been threatening, but now the sun came out hotter than ever, filling the air with a humidity that caused Frank's head to ache.

"I've got to knock off until the sun goes down a little," he said, turning first red and then pale. "This climate doesn't seem to agree with me at all."

Ben shook his head seriously. "Yes, we will rest," he said; and they made another halt under some cedars. "I'm afraid Frank is getting ready for a sick spell," he remarked to Gilbert, when the pair had walked away, on a scout for something to eat. "He looks odd in the eyes and around the mouth."

"I am afraid you're right, Ben," was the reply of the young Southerner. He shook his head dubiously. "Heaven help him if he catches the fever, and so far from home."

CHAPTER XXI

PRISONERS THREE

Food was a scarce article, for the insurgents and Spaniards had stripped the country. "We'll have a job finding something," said Gilbert; and his words proved true. Nearly half an hour was consumed in the hunt, and then all they brought back with them was some half-wild sugar-cane, some plantains not quite ripe, and two small birds, which the Southerner managed to bring down with his rifle.

"There used to be plenty of wild cattle in this region, but they are all gone now," said Gilbert, as he proceeded to build a fire over which to cook the birds. "The Cubans had no respect for the beasts, but slaughtered them off very much as the buffaloes were slaughtered in the Western states of our own country."

While the fire was starting, Gilbert took out his pocket-knife and began to whittle off the ends of the sugar-cane, so that the sweet and tender por-

tions of the stalks might be eaten. "Sugar-cane and plantains make rather a tiresome substitute for good home-made bread," he remarked, "but they're much better than nothing. I'll roast a few of the plantains, and you can try them that way for a change." This was done, and Ben declared the dish quite palatable.

It was not until three in the afternoon that they started again, Frank feeling once more "like himself," according to his own statement. But the young sergeant was by no means well, and an experienced eye could easily have told that the dread tropical fever had claimed him as a victim.

The three were jogging along in route step when, on making a turn in the trail, they came, without warning, upon a village of ten or a dozen huts, standing in irregular rows upon two sides of a roadway made by widening the trail. The huts were of logs, covered with palm roofs.

"Hullo! halt!" cried Gilbert, who was in advance, and the three at once sprang back. Not a soul was in sight, and the village looked deserted.

"I don't believe there are any Spaniards about," said Ben, after a wait of several minutes. "Supposing I call out?"

The others agreed, and he set up a fairly loud yell, to which there was no response. Presently, however, a lonely-looking dog came from one of the huts and set up a doleful whine.

"That settles it; the place is deserted," said Frank; and the three pushed forward. The first four huts visited contained nothing worth mentioning; in the fifth a sight met their gaze which burned itself indelibly upon their minds, and filled them with horror.

To the rear of the hut, upon a mat of grass, rested the body of an old man, a mere skeleton, his hands clasping his bunched-up knees, and his head fallen forward. Close at hand, rested an aged woman, also reduced to mere skin and bones. The woman held the remains of an infant in her arms. Man and woman were chained to the flooring of the hut by an iron chain, and had died, beyond a doubt, of starvation.

"This is fearful!" gasped Ben, as he looked upon the scene. He could stand it but for a moment — then he rushed back into the open.

"There is an actual testimony of Spanish cruelty," said Gilbert, as he, too, came away. "The young men of that household have most likely

joined the troops of the rebels, the Spanish have come here and found it out, and this is the way the old folks and the baby are rewarded. Do you wonder that the Cubans, too, are cruel, and burn down canefields belonging to Spanish residents, and cut their enemies to pieces?"

"No, I don't wonder, Gilbert," returned Ben. "But I say it is high time Uncle Sam steps in and puts a stop to such barbarity."

The sight had made Frank feel sick again. "You can go into the other huts, if you wish, but count me out," he said. Ben declined, and Gilbert went the rounds alone, finding one more body, that of a young woman, shot through the neck.

The settlement was quickly left in the rear, and they commenced climbing another hill. They were now nearing Sevilla, and presently, from a great distance, they heard the sounds of firing.

"Our troops cannot be far off!" exclaimed Ben, joyfully. "Oh, how good it will feel to get back into the ranks again."

"Don't crow too soon," returned the Southerner. "Remember, that firing shows that the enemy as well as our friends are at hand. We don't want to walk into the wrong camp."

"I'd like to know how our regiment is making out," put in Frank. "We are bound to go to the front, if the generals will let us."

"It's a pity our troops haven't smokeless powder," resumed Gilbert. "The Spaniards use nothing else, and it gives them a great advantage, to my way of reasoning."

"Yes, and I wish I had a Mauser rifle, or a Krag-Jorgensen, such as the regulars carry. This rifle is completely out of date, for such work as is cut out for us here," commented Ben. The old-style firearms bothered the volunteers a good deal throughout the Cuban campaign, because of their smoke-making qualities.

On and on they went, up hill and down, and through a tangle of brush that seemed to have no end. The sun had again gone under a cloud, and Gilbert announced that the rain would not hold off much longer. "And when it does come, why, look out, that's all," he added grimly.

But no time was left to them to speculate upon the weather. Less than a hundred yards further had been covered when a rustling in the bushes to their left attracted their attention, and in an instant several rifle-barrels were aimed at them.

"*Alto!*" came the command to halt, and as the three stopped they heard some one in the brush mutter, "*Americanos.*"

The three Americans were in a bad situation; they could see that at a glance. Glancing over to the right of the trail, they saw an equal number of rifles pointed at them from that vicinity. They were caught between two fires. Ben looked at the others in perplexity. "What shall we do?" he asked.

"Follow me!" cried Gilbert, and like a flash he turned and disappeared into the brush on the back trail. Ben and Frank went after him, and at the same instant a volley of shots rang out, the bullets whistling alarmingly close.

Crack! it was Gilbert's weapon. He had seen a Spaniard not fifty feet away, in the tanglewood, and had let drive. A howl of pain filled the air, and then came two more shots, from Ben and Frank. Whether or not the youths hit any one they could not tell, but immediate pursuit was checked, and once in the brush they paused to reload.

"We walked into a spider's nest that trip," panted Frank. "There must be twenty or thirty of the enemy after us."

"Come up the hill," ordered the young Southerner. "The higher up we are, the safer we will be."

Ordinarily this might have been so, but it was not to be in the present case. In going up the slope they ran into a batch of the Spaniards, and once again found themselves confronted, and now in such a manner that escape was out of the question.

"Throw down your guns or we will kill you!" yelled a fierce-looking Spanish lieutenant, in very bad English. "Surrender, you American pigs!" —pigs being a favorite word with the Spanish soldiers when referring to our own gallant men.

"We're blocked!" muttered Frank, and he threw down his gun, and Gilbert did likewise. Seeing this, Ben did the same, and with yells of delight the Spaniards, to the number of thirty or forty, gathered around them. Ben was astonished to see how thin and starved-out many of them looked, — no better than the Cubans that had been encountered. The rebellion of the past three years had told fearfully upon both sides.

The three rifles were confiscated first, and then the Spanish lieutenant demanded that they pass

over all of their other weapons, including their pocket-knives. The latter he thrust into his own pocket. "He'll keep them to remember us by," muttered Frank. "What a greasy-looking sneak he is!"

"He shan't keep them if I know it," murmured Ben, in return, and then he received a rap on his arm from the flat side of the officer's sword, with an order to keep silent.

Frank's stripes, as sergeant, had attracted attention, and he was placed under particular surveillance when the three were ordered to move forward. The arms of each had been bound tightly behind him, and a guard of six men stalked along ready to shoot down the first who should show an inclination to escape.

The trail was soon left behind, and the Spaniards with their prisoners came out upon a level clearing, bound on one side by high rocks and on the other sides by thickets of trees and grass. In the midst of the clearing stood several heavy posts, supporting a thatched roof of immense palm branches. This was a kind of shelter common to Spanish officers when on the move throughout Cuba during the rebellion.

The camp reached, Ben wondered what would happen next, but was not kept speculating long. Procuring some heavy ropes, made of braided vines, the Spanish soldiers, directed by the lieutenant, proceeded to bind each prisoner fast to one of the poles just mentioned. As the poles were ten or twelve feet apart, Ben was placed just that distance from Frank on one side, and Gilbert on the other, so that secret communication, under the watchful eyes of the guards, was out of the question.

"We're in a pickle now!" thought the young volunteer, gloomily. "I wonder what they will do with us? One thing is certain: they won't let us go. We're booked either to be shot or else taken into Santiago as prisoners of war."

CHAPTER XXII

THE ESCAPE FROM THE SPANISH CAMP

It was growing dark when the three prisoners were left to themselves by the enemy, but soon a camp-fire was lit and also several beeswax candles, that the lieutenant might make a report in a flat pass-book he carried — a proceeding which Ben watched with interest.

"You speak your name?" said the Spaniard, and the young volunteer did so. Frank and Gilbert were asked the same question. The officer looked puzzled when the young Southerner mentioned that he was a Rough Rider.

"Where is your horse?" he asked; and when told it had not yet been forwarded he grunted in contempt. "*Americano* is a paper soldier — we will show the pigs their place ere we are done with them." And he turned away.

Over the camp-fire two of the Spaniards were constructing a *parilla*, made by driving four short

stakes in the ground in the form of a square and covering these with green twigs. An opening was left where the fire blazed the strongest, and here was placed a large, flat kettle filled with water.

When they had first come into camp Ben had wondered what would be served for an evening meal, or if they would have to go hungry. He now saw the cook dump a quantity of rice into the kettle, then chop up sweet potatoes and the ever-present garlic. Then came a fierce squealing from a near-by thicket.

"Gracious! that sounds like a baby!" he thought, and was compelled to smile inwardly when the cook brought forth a small pig. The beast was quickly slaughtered with a machete, doubtless one taken from a dead Cuban, and several chunks of pork were thrown into the pot, which was now bubbling merrily.

It was plain to see that the Spaniards felt by no means safe in their retreat. Eight pickets had been thrown out, and every soldier kept his weapons where they could easily be reached. The men belonged to the Spanish Reserves, and had been sent from a station on Guantanamo Bay to increase the forces on the outposts of Santiago.

As has been mentioned, the Cubans under General Garcia had undertaken to hold back many of the enemy marching towards the city to be besieged, and as the Cubans carried on nothing but a guerilla sort of warfare, to pass them in large bodies was impossible in the hills, without heavy losses; hence the Spaniards were moving for Santiago in detachments of fifty to two hundred men each.

Feeling exceedingly thirsty, Frank asked for a drink, and was given some muddy water scooped from the pool under the rocks. It was hardly palatable, yet the young sergeant drank it, and this probably increased the fever already working through his system. For their own use, the Spaniards concocted the Cuban drink called *guarapo*, made by stirring bits of ripe sugar-cane in lukewarm water, — not a bad mixture, and one which is said to neutralize whatever there is bad in the water itself.

As hungry as he was, Ben could scarcely swallow the mess of half-stewed pork and vegetables given him. "Not a bit of salt," he grumbled. At this the Spanish lieutenant grunted and threw him a half-ripe orange. "Some *Americano* here use that," he said. Fishing out the bits of sweet potatoes

and the rice, the young volunteer seasoned them with the sour juice of the orange, and then "it went down, and no more," so Ben said afterward.

As night advanced, the brightness of the camp-fire was dimmed by a quantity of green brush, which gave forth a dense smoke and kept off the mosquitoes and other insects. The soldiers gathered in a circle about the fire, and under the open-sided shelter, and were soon snoring lustily. All had previously smoked cigarettes, and these remained in the mouths of some as they slumbered.

Ben and his companions had been allowed to slip down to the foot of the uprights which held them prisoners, but they were not unloosed, and to sleep in such uncomfortable positions was out of the question. Frank dozed, but Ben and Gilbert were wide awake.

It was nearly midnight, when a slight sish! caught Ben's ears. He raised his head, and in the uncertain light saw Gilbert nodding vigorously towards the camp-fire. Here a man had been left on guard, but he was snoring as loudly as his companions.

"We must get away if we can," whispered the Southerner.

"I'm willing," was Ben's soft answer. "But how? I've tried my best to free my hands, but it can't be done."

"There is a man lying behind you, on the other side of the post. Can't you reach his machete with your teeth by bending over?"

Ben turned back and looked at the man, a six-footer, with heavy, black moustache, and a fierce look on his bronzed face. "He'll kill me if he learns what I am up to," he thought.

Yet he did not hesitate, for he had no desire to be taken into the city as a prisoner of war, knowing full well how badly Cubans and Americans were faring in the Spanish prisons and dungeons. Twisting around, he bent over the sleeping form and with his teeth began to extract the machete from the fellow's broad belt.

The keen blade was almost in his possession when the soldier gave a start and a long sigh. Instantly Ben dropped back and pretended to be fast asleep. But the alarm was a false one, and the Spaniard slept on.

He had the machete at last. What was to be done next? He sat still in deep perplexity.

"Slip it over your shoulder and grab it with your

hands," whispered Gilbert. "Then you can saw the vines apart somehow."

To speak thus was easy; to follow the directions exceedingly difficult. The machete came down on Ben's open palm and made the blood spurt. He started to cry out with pain, but checked himself, and began to saw away in a bungling fashion.

"Are you making it?" asked the young Southerner, anxiously. "Don't let the knife drop out of your reach."

Alas! the words were scarcely uttered than the machete took a twist and fell down close to the sleeping Spaniard's feet. Ben tried to reach it again with his mouth, but in vain. "I've done it now!" he groaned, and, in sheer desperation, gave the vines a jerk. A snapping followed, and to his joy he found himself free.

Scarcely daring to breathe, he crawled forward and took up the blade which had helped him to gain his liberty. In a few seconds he was at Gilbert's side, and had liberated his friend.

"Now beware how you assist Frank," cautioned the young Southerner. "I'll clap my hand over his mouth and speak to him, while you cut his bonds." And they moved forward to the young sergeant.

"Wha — what?" gasped Frank, when Gilbert cut him short. "No noise, Frank; we are going to try to escape," he whispered into the youth's ear, and Frank understood. In another moment the trio were crawling from the shelter, but not before each had secured his rifle and his belt full of ammunition. Frank was very much excited, and on taking his hand Ben discovered that it burnt almost like fire. "God spare him if he gets the fever," he prayed mentally. All of the soldiers had a horror of going to the hospital.

"Wait — our pocket-knives," whispered Gilbert, and turned back after handing Ben his rifle. He had the machete, and with this ready for use crawled towards the lieutenant.

"It's too risky!" murmured Frank, but the young Southerner did not hesitate. He knew in what pocket the knives had been placed and soon had them in his possession. "Forward, and the greater distance we place between ourselves and these fellows, the better for us," he said, and away they went.

As previously mentioned, a storm was gathering, and once away from the fitful glare of the camp-fire, the three found it impossible to see a yard ahead

of them. They blundered along, in the direction they thought the trail must be located. The Southerner was in front, still holding the machete.

"*Alto!*" suddenly came the cry, from less than two yards away. Then from a small opening came the outline of a Mauser barrel. Like a flash Gilbert was on the guard. "Don't fire, or I will kill you!" he cried, in broken Spanish, and threw the mouth of the weapon upward. The soldier wanted to struggle, but when he saw the point of the machete pointed directly at his throat, he thought better of it.

"Take his gun," went on Gilbert, and this was quickly done. "Now lead us down to the road," he went on, in Spanish. "And remember, if you betray us, your life shall pay the forfeit."

At this the Spaniard shivered, and Ben scarcely blamed him, for Gilbert looked fierce enough to do anything. Turning, the man passed along through a stretch of tall grass and under some palms. Beyond was the trail, now widening into a fairly respectable road.

Fortunately the Southerner had not lost his bearings, and now knew in which way to turn. "You will go with us for a few miles," he said to his

prisoner. "If you do what is right, I will not harm you."

For answer, the Spaniard muttered something under his breath, far from complimentary to *Americanos* in general and the party of three in particular. He wanted to do something awful, — to slay all of them, — but with that machete close to his side and Ben's rifle pointed at his head, his predominating thought was to save his own life and let the glory of Spain go.

On and on they stalked, through the darkness, the Spaniard often looking backward and to the right and the left, in hope that help might come to hand. The three pressed him closely, giving him no chance to escape under cover of the night. His face was full of fear. Perhaps he thought the Americans would kill him, or take him to their camp and starve him to death. He had often heard from his ignorant officers that it was better to fall in battle than to be taken prisoner by the "pigs," who would surely treat him no better than a beast. This idea was firmly installed in the minds of all the Spanish soldiers, and when, later on, some were taken, the kind treatment they received filled them with amazement and joy.

Presently, at the distance of a little over a mile, they came to a mountain torrent. Not feeling certain about a fording-place in the darkness, they determined to try leaping to the other side. "You go first," said Gilbert to the prisoner, and the Spaniard did so. The next moment he had disappeared around a high rock, and they heard him crashing through the brush as though a legion of demons were pursuing him. Ben was about to fire after him, but the Southerner checked him.

"It won't do any good, and our enemies may hear the noise," he said. "Let him go. By the time he gets back to tell the news we can be a good three miles away. Come, we'll make the most of our time." And he set off on a semi-trot, which Ben easily imitated, but which taxed Frank to the utmost. All fondly hoped they had seen the last of the Spanish detachment, but they were mistaken.

CHAPTER XXIII

CAUGHT IN A TROPICAL STORM

"I KNEW we should catch it!" remarked Ben, as a low rumble of thunder reached their ears. "The storm seems to be a good way off, but it is travelling towards this quarter as fast as it can."

"Perhaps it was the booming of cannons," said Frank. "Oh, my head! It's buzzing like a saw-mill!"

"You must have a good rest as soon as we get settled," returned Ben, kindly. "Give me your arm." And he supported the young sergeant. "No, it's no cannon — see the light!"

A broad streak had illuminated the western sky. Now the lightning came again, and by its aid they looked along the road for a considerable distance.

"Unless I'm mistaken I saw a hut," cried Gilbert. "It's far down the hill, to the right of the trail. We can stop there if the storm breaks."

"But the Spaniards — " began Ben.

"They won't want to move around any more than we," returned the young Southerner. "You don't know what a real Cuban thunderstorm is yet."

He was right; but Ben was not kept long in ignorance. Soon the wind began to blow, first a fair breeze and then with a rush that bent everything before it, and sent many a wild plantain, heavily loaded with its fruit, to the earth. The tall trees swayed and creaked, and where the road led through a woods the air was filled with rotted twigs and stretches of torn-away vines.

"It's coming!" cried Gilbert. "Yes, I was right; there is the hut, and it looks deserted. We can't get to it any too quick!" And he urged his companions along.

The wind had brought some scattering drops of rain. These were very large, and the plop-plop of the drops on the broad palm leaves could be distinctly heard. Now came a steady patter, and then there broke forth a perfect deluge which soaked them to the skin.

"Great Cæsar! talk about the rain at Camp Black — it wasn't a patch to this!" panted Frank. He could scarcely get his breath, and both Ben

and Gilbert had to help him along. The road was left behind, and they plunged into the deep grass leading to the hut just as a crack of thunder came which seemed to split the very heavens. As they crossed the threshold the cloud-burst came in all of its fury, blotting out aught else, and turning the road into a good-sized stream. The atmosphere was suffocating.

To the surprise of the three, when they entered the hut they found it was not as dark inside as they had anticipated. In a little cage, built of twigs and "file" grass, were confined a dozen *cocuyos*, a species of tropical fireflies, but not such fireflies as are known to our country. The *cocuyo* is more like a beetle, and is from an inch to an inch and a half in length, with two good-sized wings. The light coming from the cage was, of course, spasmodic, yet it was equal to that of a fair-sized taper.

"*Suena el trueno!* (The thunder roars!)" muttered a voice from the back of the hut, and then the three saw two aged negroes sitting in a far corner. The men were tall, gaunt creatures, scantily dressed in cotton shirts and trousers, each with a belt about his waist containing his sugar-cane

knife. On seeing the newcomers, both struggled to their feet in alarm.

"Don't fear; we are friends," said Gilbert, in the best Spanish he could command. At this the aged negroes came closer, and on seeing they were American soldiers, broke into smiles and would have embraced the three had they been allowed.

"We saw a great number of the troops yesterday," said the younger of the pair, in answer to a question from the young Southerner. "They were marching for San Juan and El Caney. Brave, brave men! How glad we are they have come!"

"Are there any of our troops near here?" asked Gilbert.

The negro shook his head. "I believe not. What do you think, Guido?" And he turned to his companion.

The elderly negro also shook his head. "They are miles away — driving the accursed Spaniards before them like so many cattle. It will take a good night's march to overtake them."

"It's rather discouraging, but I'm glad to know we are on the right road to our camp," said the Southerner, after translating the negroes' words into English. "Christopher! how it rains!"

And it was raining, "cats, dogs, and hammer-handles," as poor Frank put it. There was no let-up to the downpour, and at times the water came in solid sheets which threatened to send the *rancho*, as the native calls his hut, to the ground.

Despite their advanced age, — one was sixty-seven and the other seventy, — Gilbert found the two negroes very talkative, and gained from them much information concerning the war that had been waged between the Spanish and Cubans in that vicinity.

"I fought in the Ten Years' War," said Guido. "Then we hoped for liberty, too, but it did not come. The past three years have been slaughter, slaughter, slaughter! It was terrible, you cannot believe how bad, to have my two boys killed before my eyes and my daughters driven into Santiago to starve. They wanted me to go, but I was too proud. I said, 'Kill me, if you will; I will stay on my little homestead.' Then they knocked me down and kicked me, and said I could stay and starve, old fool that I was." Guido's eyes began to gleam. "But a day of reckoning for Spain is at hand. I can read it in the pools of water when the moon is high, and on the backs of the toads." And the aged negro waved his hands over his head. He was what

is termed a *nañigo*, a voodooist, practising and believing in a witchcraft common to the lower class of colored people in Cuba.

"Well, he's about right," said Ben. "Mummery or no mummery, General Shafter will get his troops into shape soon, and then the Spanish army in and about Santiago will hear something very much to its disadvantage."

Jeronimo, the other negro, had fought for two years under Antonio Maceo, and showed a scar on his left arm where a bullet had ploughed through the flesh. He said that he had once commanded a troop of thirty-six negroes who had laid in ambush for a Spanish regiment which had just arrived from Barcelona. The regiment was not used to guerilla warfare, and had been caught while passing through a stretch of swamp-grass. A third of the Spaniards had been killed and an equal number wounded. "We attended to the wounded," he grinned, in conclusion, meaning that those who did not get away had been butchered. To these men, who had suffered so much among their own families, the thought of taking prisoners was never given a second's consideration. It was "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," and more, if it could be obtained. A

Christian-like spirit was still of the uncertain future.

The thunder now became so incessant that further conversation was impossible, and Ben and the others sank down on the floor of the hut to await the end of the "bombardment," as the young volunteer said. "If only we are not struck, I shall be satisfied," he added. They were not hit, but a mahogany a hundred yards off was, and they saw the split tree blaze away furiously in spite of the wet.

Gilbert had predicted that the storm would not last long, at least not the heavy part of it, and in this he was right. Inside of half an hour, the thunder and lightning drifted eastward, and the downpour became nothing more than a steady shower. The air, however, was as close as ever, and Frank declared that he felt that he was "stewing."

"I hope you keep on perspiring," answered the young Southerner. "I wish I had some quinine to give you;" quinine being the best specific for tropical fever in its first stages.

He spoke to Guido, and the old negro brought forth some powdered bark he carried in a pigskin bag. "It will help him," he said, and Frank took the dose in some *guarapo*. Then the voodooist

began a chant, which the three Americans listened to in all gravity. "No use in hurting their feelings," said Ben. The chant ended, the negro bowed three times in the direction in which the sun had set.

A short discussion was held, and the three decided that nothing could be done until it grew lighter. "I feel tired out and must sleep," said Frank, and almost immediately closed his eyes. Ben and Gilbert looked at each other and shook their heads. Certainly Frank was in a bad way. "What will his poor mother do if he gets sick down here and dies?" thought the young volunteer.

By five o'clock the rain was reduced to nothing but a dreary drizzle, and it was already growing light over the hills to the eastward. Jeronimo was stirring up a fire the storm had about drowned out. Although poor, he had a small cocoa-shell full of coffee in the *rancho*, and was determined the *Americanos* should have each a cup of this favorite beverage. "Out of honor to this visit," as he said, with a bow that would have done credit to a gentleman of the old school. Guido was also up and out, and soon returned with some fresh plantains, which he cut into slices and fried, along with some sweet potatoes,

in cocoanut milk, — a dish by no means bad, as Ben soon discovered.

While the three young soldiers were eating, Guido walked down to the road and off in the direction of the Spanish camp from which our friends had escaped. It was not long before he came back, running as rapidly as his aged limbs would permit.

"Hide! hide!" he called out, in Spanish. "The enemy are coming! They will be here in less than five minutes!"

"The enemy!" gasped Frank, in dismay. "Oh, Ben, Gilbert, what shall we do? I can't run any distance, — my head is already swimming."

"We must make a stand!" returned the young Southerner, bravely. "Are you willing, Ben?"

"I am — if there are not too many of the Spanish," answered the young volunteer. His heart beat violently, but he tried to keep calm.

"There are six — all heavily armed," went on Guido. "Run, run, if you would save yourselves."

"We cannot run — our friend is too sick," Gilbert returned, in Spanish. "We will fight, and the hut must be our fort. Have you guns?"

"Alas, señor, no!"

"Here is one extra one, — that we took from the picket last night, — and here is the ammunition for it. That gives us four guns against six. You are willing to aid us?"

"To the last drop of blood, señor," replied Guido, earnestly; and the other negro said the same.

"Good; then we will have five to their six, and the *rancho* to shelter us. Get out of sight, and prepare to do battle as soon as called upon. It may be they will pass without stopping to investigate."

"I will try to put them off the scent," said Guido, and stepped into the open, unarmed. "Make no further noise, for they are coming; I can already see their gun-barrels shining among the trees."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SKIRMISH AT THE RANCHO

MAKING no noise, Ben and his companions, along with Jeronimo, retired to the rear of the *rancho* and looked to see that their weapons were ready for use.

"We may be in for a hot fight, boys," said Gilbert, earnestly. Then he held out his hand to Ben and to Frank. "Good-by, if anything happens to me."

The words affected all, and they looked keenly into one another's faces. "If they attack us, we'll face death, that's certain," thought Ben, and breathed a silent prayer for their safe deliverance.

In a minute more the Spanish soldiers came in plain sight. Seeing Guido, the under-officer, a short, fat fellow, ordered his squad to halt.

"Tell me, have you seen any *Americanos* about here?" he asked, in his native tongue.

Guido bowed low and shook his head. "I see nobody, *capitan*, absolutely nobody."

The negro's manner was very respectful, and it tickled the under-officer's vanity to be addressed as captain, he being but a corporal. Nevertheless, he looked doubtful. "You are certain none of the pigs have passed this way since yesterday evening? We are looking for three in particular — one a young man and the others not even so old."

Again Guido shook his head. "I have seen nobody, *capitan;* the road has been deserted ever since the storm came on."

There was a pause. "It is strange," muttered the officer, half to himself. "They came this way, and they could not take to the brush during the night, and in such a cloud-burst."

"Shall I look into the hut, sir?" asked one of the soldiers, an elderly fellow with a cruel-looking face. "It will take but a moment."

"Yes, Lazano, go; and search the place well. If the fellows were here, they may have left some clew behind."

At once the soldier left the squad and started for the hut. He had taken but a dozen steps when Gilbert called to Guido.

"Come in here, quick!" he cried. "Halt, I say, halt!" he added to Lazano, in a loud, firm tone.

The command was not to be mistaken, and the Spanish soldier stood as still as a statue. "They are here, corporal!" he said in an undertone.

"Come forth!" shouted the Spanish under-officer. "Come forth, whoever you are."

"We are not coming just yet," answered Gilbert. His Spanish was rather "shaky," yet he was understood perfectly. "We want you to go back to where you came from. If you won't, we'll open fire on you."

"They are here, the pigs!" shouted the Spanish corporal. "Forward, men! Surrender, or we will kill you all!" And with a flourish of his rifle, he led the attack, with his five men at his heels. He had not been told that the escaped prisoners had taken their weapons with them, and he supposed the three to be practically unarmed.

"Fire on 'em!" shouted Gilbert, and pulled the trigger of his rifle. The report had scarcely died away when Ben and Frank fired also, and the soldier who had started to search the *rancho* was seen to fall, shot through the thigh. Guido now opened with the captured Mauser, and another

man went down, shot through the neck, — a fatal wound, as it afterwards proved.

"Load just as quickly as you can!" exclaimed Gilbert, flinging the empty shell from his rifle. As the oldest of the three, he had naturally assumed the leadership. "That was a good shot, Guido," he added in Spanish. "Give it to them again!"

"*Cuba Libre!*" came from the negro. "*Cuba Libre!*" repeated his mate. The next moment Jeronimo had leaped past the others and was outside, circling the air wildly with his long machete. "That for Maceo! That for Gomez! That for Garcia!" he fairly shrieked, and struck at one and another. Two of the soldiers retreated, but the third, the corporal, received a severe wound in the arm. Jeronimo was about to follow the last cut with a blow at the under-officer's neck when a Mauser went pop! and he flung up his arms and fell back into the grass, to rise no more.

By this time the three Americans had reloaded, and now they crowded up to the window, Guido with them, to take another shot. Finding himself behind the others, Ben ran to the doorway. Bang!

Ben ran to the Doorway Page 236

went his rifle, but the bullet cut only the air and the leaves of a plantain a hundred yards away Two reports followed instantly, and he felt a stinging sensation in his knee. Then came a blaze of fire from his friends, and the Spaniards retreated for the first available shelter.

"What is it — are you struck?" asked the Southerner quickly, noting how pale Ben had become. "Where is it? in the knee? That's bad."

"I don't believe it's much," answered the youth, faintly. He had a dim vision of losing his leg and walking on a crutch for the rest of his life. He clapped his hand to the wounded part. The blood was already showing through his linen trousers.

"Must we surrender?" It was Frank who asked the question. He was reloading in feverish haste, his eyes blazing like two stars. In the excitement he had forgotten all about being sick.

"We'll not surrender if you and Ben can hold out," answered Gilbert. "We have the best of it so far. Good, Ben; that's grit." He spoke thus, for the young volunteer was reloading while standing only on his uninjured limb. "I wish I had time to look at that wound."

Guido was bemoaning the fate of Jeronimo, who had been his brother-in-law. He wished to rush out and avenge the fallen man, but Gilbert restrained him. "Stay here; you can do better with the rifle," he said. "They are behind the trees and will pick you off like a sheep, if you give them the chance."

"I will hunt them as sheep," answered Guido. He waved his hand, and Mauser in arm slipped down through an opening in the back wall of the *rancho*. Looking through the exit, Gilbert saw him dive into the thick grass and disappear after the fashion of a snake.

A pause followed this proceeding, and Frank, peering from first one opening and then another, announced that not a Spaniard was in sight excepting the dead man, even the wounded having crawled off.

Bound to find out how badly he was wounded, Ben proceeded to roll up his trouser leg. The blood was still flowing freely, but, wiped away, it revealed nothing more than a deep and ugly-looking scratch.

"You're a lucky one," said Gilbert, as he bound up the wound with his handkerchief. "Had that

bullet come an inch closer it would have gone through your knee joint, — one of the nastiest shots one can get, so I've been told."

"Don't shout — we're not out of the woods yet," returned Ben, with a faint smile. "Hark! that is Guido, I'll wager a dollar!"

He was right. Crawling up behind one of the hidden Spaniards, the negro had blazed away and avenged the death of his brother-in-law. But the aged man was not allowed to escape. Two of the Spanish soldiers fell upon him, and he was put out of this world within a minute after firing his own weapon.

"I'll tell you what I think they're going to do," said Frank, after ten minutes of breathless silence had passed. "One is going back to that camp for reënforcements while the others are watching to prevent our escaping."

"I don't doubt but that you are right," answered the young Southerner. "The question is, shall we make a rush for liberty? I don't mean now, but as soon as we feel assured the messenger has really gone."

"I'd rather rush than become a Spanish prisoner," put in Ben. "Now we have fought them,

they won't treat us half decently; I'm satisfied of that."

"The trouble is, your knee won't let you rush very far," resumed Gilbert. "And Frank is just as badly off; I can see that plainly. If it was dark, we'd have a far better chance to get away."

"Perhaps we can 'hold the fort' until it gets dark," returned Ben. "If they — Hark! Oh, boys, it's our troops, as sure as guns!"

A loud shouting from down the road had reached Ben's ears. All listened intently. The shouting came closer, and a dozen rifle-shots rang out, followed by fierce yells in Spanish. Then of a sudden, two companies of United States regulars burst into view. "Hurrah! we're saved!" Ben ejaculated, and ran into the open, with Frank and Gilbert beside him. Across a long stretch of tall grass they made out what was left of the party that had attacked the *rancho*, fleeing with all the swiftness left to their limbs. They took hasty aim and fired, but the shots were useless.

The regulars had about finished their pursuit of the flying enemy, and the unexpected appearance of our friends, with the sight of the dead Span-

iard and the two dead negroes, brought them to a stop. The ranking captain of the two companies formed his command into a square and then hurried forward to learn what had taken place.

"You've certainly had a hot time of it," he said, when they had told their story. "We're all having hot times, it would seem."

"Can you tell us where to find our companies?" asked Ben, eagerly.

"I think I can come pretty close to it," was the captain's reply. "So far our army has kept well together, although now some of the divisions are pushing up to the northward. You've been shot, I see."

"It is not much, sir; only a bad scratch. But my friend here is sick — getting the fever, I am afraid."

At the latter words the captain shook his head doubtfully. "Too bad! This campaign will have to be short and sweet, or half of the boys will be in the hospital. We had eight men of our regiment taken down yesterday and to-day. Come along, if you can walk. If you can't, I'll have the hospital corps get out a couple of stretchers."

"We'll try walking first," said Ben, after con-

sulting Frank; and three minutes later they had temporarily joined the two companies of regulars and turned in the direction of Firmeza, a small town situated about midway between Baiquiri and Santiago.

CHAPTER XXV

THE LEADER OF THE ROUGH RIDERS

THE two companies of regulars moved along in route step, picking the easiest walking to be found over a stony and uneven path which in years gone by had been an ox-cart road, but which had evidently not been worked for a long while.

Ben had placed himself beside a jolly-looking regular, who, from his appearance, was from the West. The man, whose name was Dennison, was not above talking, and as the young volunteer trudged along as easily as his bandaged knee permitted, the regular gave him the outline of what had occurred during the past forty-eight hours.

"The Dons are on the retreat to Santiago by way of Sevilla," he said. "We've had half a dozen little scraps, but nothing half as bad as that affair at La Quasima, which opened the boys' eyes to the fact that this campaign was no lawn party. Was your friend of the Rough Riders in that?"

"Yes, and wounded, too, although he got but a scratch like myself."

"It was a regular ambuscade, so I've been told by one of our fellows of the Tenth Cavalry. General Wheeler gave out that there were sixteen killed and fifty-two wounded, besides about a dozen or so missing. How did you come to drift away from your regiment?"

Ben told him. "My friend, the sergeant, and I felt sure we could find an easier road," he added.

"You want to stick to your company when you're on the march in an enemy's country, my boy. I tried your trick once, when I was out in Dakota, near the Indian reservation, and I almost got my hair raised for doing it. But I agree with you, the roads are something awful. The engineering corps have every available man out, cutting down the brush, levelling the rough spots, and building substantial bridges in place of these ramshackle affairs now over the streams. So far nothing but a few pack trains have come through, but they are hoping to bring up the artillery and wagons before the end of this week."

"Has the navy been doing anything?"

"I haven't heard of anything in particular, ex-

cepting that they are trying to cut one cable and connect with another. They are watching Cervera's fleet and waiting for Shafter to attack Santiago proper. We'll have the hottest kind of a time then."

Although allowed to talk freely, the soldiers were on their guard as they moved along. They were in heavy marching order, each man carrying several pounds of rations and ammunition, along with his rifle, blanket, half-tent cloth and poncho, or rubber sleeping-cloth. Ben and Frank wondered if they would be able to get fresh outfits to supply those lost in the tumble down hill, but were glad they had not just then the loads to carry. "The gun is enough," sighed the young sergeant, and Ben agreed with him. Strange to say, the walk seemed to do Frank good, or else it was the medicine the unfortunate Guido had administered. Yet the fever was there and was bound to break out sooner or later.

It was by no means a clear day. A mist hung in the valley between the hills, and it was hard to tell whether it was raining or not. From the sopping vegetation the evaporation filled the atmosphere with the scent of "something growing green and

rank," as one of the officers of the campaign has expressed it. It was this air that had much to do with putting hundreds of our brave boys on their backs with fever and other maladies peculiar to the tropics.

Firmeza, a place of small importance, was passed on the left about noon, and the regulars branched off on a side trail leading to a settlement called Santa Ana. The walking became rougher than ever, and Ben, his knee growing stiffer and stiffer, felt he must drop behind. He and Frank and Gilbert were now walking together.

"If only we could locate some one we knew — " began Ben, when a cry from Frank cut him short.

"Look! look! it is Casey and Stummer! Hullo, fellows! Seventy-first ahoy!"

"Whoop! Well I niver!" came from Dan Casey, and he came rushing along the trail as rapidly as his pack would allow. "Alive, the both of ye, and all hands thought ye dead!" And he shook hands heartily. Soon Stummer came up also, to be followed by Peter Wilkens and several others. Some mules of the pack train had run away into the brush and become lost, and the volunteers were bringing supplies into camp on their shoulders.

"I dinks me dose Spaniards haf shooted you," said Stummer, smiling broadly. "Und you vos shooted, too." And he looked at the wounded knee.

"It's only a flea-bite, Carl." Now that Ben was among friends he felt much relieved. "Have you done any fighting yet?"

"A little — on the picket line," put in Peter Wilkens. He stopped short and doubled up with a sudden roar of laughter. "Gee whiz! but I've got a good story to tell ye! Remember how Holgait and Montgomery Dwight were always boastin' as to how they'd lick them Dons when they got the chance? Well, last night Casey, Stummer, I, and half a dozen others on guard fixed up a joke on 'em. We got 'em to bragging about what they would do, and then all of a sudden four of the fellers sprung out o' the grass, and we yelled 'Spaniards! look out!' and, say, Holgait and Dwight dusted as though the Old Nick was after 'em, and hid behind a rock, and when the boys came up, Holgait yells, 'Don't shoot! I give up,' and Dwight chimes in, 'Don't kill me, and you can have all I've got!' Oh, it was the richest thing ever heard of." And Peter Wilkens roared again, and everybody joined in.

"They won't forgive that trick," remarked Ben, after he had stopped laughing. "What have they to say about it?"

"Sure an' phwat could they say?" answered Casey. "It's like sheep they acted. Dwight tried to say he understood the joke and had acted his part just for fun, but nobody would listen to him. Every day Holgait is wishin' he was home again, because he has no hand basin to wash in and no mirry by which to comb his hair. I suppose he'd die if he didn't get that long hair of his parted exactly in the middle." And another laugh went up. It was plain to see that, even if the volunteers were not as rough-and-ready as the regulars, they were by no means dudes.

Gilbert was very anxious to find the Rough Riders, yet no one could give him any definite news concerning that troop. But half an hour later, as they were passing through the camp of a regiment of regulars, he came face to face with an officer on horseback whom he instantly recognized.

"Colonel Roosevelt!"

The well-known organizer of the Rough Riders stopped short. "Hullo, what are you doing here, my man?" he demanded.

"I'm just getting back to camp, colonel. I was knocked out in that first skirmish several days ago, and I've had a whole lot of adventures among the Cubans and Spaniards since."

"Indeed? Were you wounded, or was it the heat?" And the gallant leader was all attention. No officer took a greater personal interest in his men than did this whole-souled man of the city and the plains. To him "a man was a man," no matter how high or how humble his station in life. And it was this manner of looking at things that made him so generally beloved in the army.

"I was wounded, sir — only a nip in the arm. I am looking for my troop."

"You will find them behind yonder hill. Follow this trail and turn into the first on the left." And with a pleasant wave of his hand Lieutenant-Colonel Roosevelt galloped away.

The little party moved off, and at the fork in the road the young Southerner bade his companions good-by. "We'll meet again before long, I'm certain of it," he said, and added to Frank, "Take care of yourself, and as soon as you can find the surgeon make him give you a big dose of quinine."

The advice was scarcely needed, for poor Frank

was having alternate flashes of heat and cold, and trembled visibly. "Poor chap, he's got it, sure," murmured Ben to Wilkens, to which Peter added, "I guess he has, an' it's wuss ten times over nor any fever an' ager ever I took to hum!" Casey and Stummer were likewise much concerned.

It was growing dark when the camp of the regiment was gained. It was on the side of a hill thickly overgrown with cacti and a tangle of wild vegetation. The tents were placed in irregular rows, and the camp-fires were few and far between.

It did Ben's heart good to receive such a warm welcome as was accorded to the pair that had gone astray. "We had put you on the missing list," said Captain Blank, "but Corporal Dawgon said he thought a Spanish sharpshooter had picked you off." Then he asked about Ben's knee, and finding that it was only a bit sore and stiff, ordered him to the hospital tent for liniment. "And you get something just as quick as you can," he added to Frank.

At the hospital tent they found a dozen patients, some of whom had been shot. Ben was soon cared for, and the doctor took Frank in charge. "You

get down on that bed," he ordered. "Your case is nothing to be fooled over." And Frank threw himself down, and was glad of the chance. Before Ben retired for the night he called to see how his chum was getting on, and found the young sergeant in a raging fever and completely out of his mind. "Hard lines," said the surgeon, laconically. "But his case is only one of several hundreds, — with how many more to follow Heaven alone knows!"

CHAPTER XXVI

AN ADVANCE ALL ALONG THE LINE

SINCE the original army of invasion had landed at Baiquiri and other near-by points, it had been increased by the addition of a number of volunteer regiments from Massachusetts and Michigan, and also by some regulars, until, as the forces moved closer and closer to the outer defences of Santiago, they numbered upward of eighteen thousand men on the firing lines.

It was General Shafter's plan to form a huge semicircle on the eastern outworks of Santiago, starting on the north, or right, at El Caney, and extending on the south, or left, to Aguadores, on the Guama River. This irregular front measured almost twenty miles, and lay along hills and table-lands and through valleys thick with forests and rank undergrowth, with here and there a mountain torrent, bridgeless and next to impossible to ford.

Amid many discomforts, the soldiers had marched

from the landing at Baiquiri, to the village of the same name, a mile and a quarter inland. From this place they had made their way to Demajayabo, a settlement composed chiefly of people working in the mines in that vicinity. Some distance beyond Demajayabo they reached the railroad used to carry minerals from the mountains to the docks on Santiago Bay, close to the city. After a brief fight our troops gained possession of this railroad, and it was used to some extent for transportation purposes. But the Spaniards had broken up the track, derailed an engine over the roadbed, and injured a bridge over which the road ran, and soon the railroad was abandoned.

The first stand of the Spaniards, at La Guasima (La Quasima), has already been spoken of in Gilbert's account. Finding they could do nothing against such a determined enemy, the Dons continued their retreat to the northwest, through Sevilla to San Juan. At San Juan they took another stand, and it was here that the most decisive battle of the campaign was fought.

Since I have said so much in my story about the volunteers engaged in this campaign, it seems to me no more than right to speak a word concerning the

regulars; that is, the men who were in the United States army long before the war broke out. These regulars, numbering perhaps twelve thousand, had been on duty throughout the West and at other points, and were thoroughly trained to their duties. They fought as only veterans can fight, and there was hardly a man but covered himself with glory. This fact is well worth remembering, as the Cuban campaign was the first in which our country pitted its regulars, in a body, against the regulars of an enemy; for the War of the Revolution, that of 1812, the Mexican War, and even the Rebellion, were contested mainly by volunteers. The glory of the regulars did not dim the glory of those who gathered at our President's call, but it did silence the sneers of those foreigners who had put down the "so-called Yankee standing army" as "paper soldiers."

The army of invasion was known as the Fifth Army Corps, and was commanded, as previously mentioned, by Major-General William R. Shafter. General Shafter's career had proved him a true soldier and one born to command. A farmer's son, used to handling the scythe and the pitchfork, Shafter worked his way up until, at the opening of the Civil War, he joined a Michigan company as

first lieutenant. He served with honor all through this war, and became major, colonel, and finally brigadier-general in the regular army. At the conclusion of the Rebellion he was placed in command of the Department of California.

The troops under General Shafter were divided into two divisions of infantry, two brigades of cavalry, and two brigades of light and four batteries of heavy artillery. The cavalry were largely without horses, and the artillery moved so slowly that a portion of it proved practically useless. For this, the condition of the roads was, of course, responsible, some of the gunners fairly weeping when they found they could not get their guns up to the firing lines.

At first, while the troops were in the vicinity of Aguadores, Sevilla, and San Juan, the firing line was a heavy one, and the Spaniards made no attempt to withstand it, but as body after body of the troops moved northward, to cover the northeastern approaches to Santiago, the firing line became thinner and thinner, for it takes a great many soldiers to cover a line fifteen or twenty miles in length, and some regiments must always be held in reserve, to rush to any part of the line which may suffer a sudden attack.

At the end of June the positions of the two armies had been assumed for the final contest. The Spaniards had surrounded their city from the water batteries on the north, in a semicircle eastward and southward to Aguadores, where they were supported by the batteries near the entrance to Santiago harbor. The American forces were lying in a long, thin line outside of this semicircle, with a larger portion of the troops at San Juan and marching for El Caney. To the north of El Caney were located the insurgents under General Garcia, and the remaining Cuban forces were gathered on the eastern slopes of Santiago Bay, to prevent reenforcements for the doomed city from coming in from the western provinces.

Both El Caney and San Juan lay on the tops of hills, and it was known that, once these places were taken, it would be only a question of time as to when the heavy guns could be brought up and trained on Santiago, when the city would be at the Americans' mercy. El Caney, especially, being but two miles from the city proper, afforded an excellent spot for siege guns, should they be required.

To the difficulties already encountered was now added another, new to warfare. This was the use

of barbed wire, strung here and there across the trails and roads, and formed into almost solid fences, six and eight feet high, in the centres of open fields which had to be crossed. The wire barriers in the forests were bad enough, but those in the open were much more dreaded by our soldiers. Many regulars were provided with wire-cutters, but no matter how hasty the movements of a body of troops, more or less of a halt was necessitated to cut down the fence or climb over it, and during this halt, the Spaniards, lying concealed in trenches or in the woods beyond, would pour in an incessant and deadly fire.

The wire fencing was a continual source of annoyance to Stummer, who invariably stuck fast and had to be pulled away minus small bits of his clothing. "Dot vos besser around a cow-field nor here," he grumbled. "I dink I vos scratched in apout dree dousand blaces alretty, und my clothes vos like von vater-sieve."

"Never mind, Carl; it's all for Old Glory, remember," answered Ben, cheerfully. "Three cheers for the Red, White, and Blue!" And a moment later the whole company was singing that grand old song as lustily as their fagged-out condition per-

mitted. Singing was the order of the day, and everything "went" from "America" to a negro song which had just become popular. The latter composition had a good marching swing to it, and was heard morning, noon, and night, and even the bands played it, whenever they got a chance to use their instruments, which was not often.

A war balloon had been sent with the expedition and had been used to advantage, working in conjunction with the Signal Corps, a body of men whose duties are to transmit messages from one point to another, by means of flags, light, and other signals. The war balloon, however, became at once a promising target for the Spaniards, who soon blew it to pieces with shrapnel.

Late in the afternoon of an unusually wet day Ben found himself lagging behind; for, though his knee was apparently doing well, it still gave him a twitch at times. He was alone, Casey and the others having pushed to the front with the intention of bathing in a stream reported to be just ahead.

The trail was rocky and dangerous, being along the steep edge of a hill. It was being used only by foot-soldiers, the horses and wagons having to go around by a longer route.

The regiment had been left to go ahead to the river, when, on looking up, the young volunteer saw before him the well-known forms of Holgait and Dwight, limping painfully forward, each dude with only a portion of his outfit, the rest having been thrown away as too heavy.

"They wouldn't throw their things away if they knew how hard it was to get others," thought Ben. To renew his own outfit had not been easy, even though he was on excellent terms with the quartermaster, and that which he now carried belonged to a soldier who had been sent back to the hospital at Siboney.

The trail became very steep, and Ben was wondering if it would not have been better to follow the wagons on the long route, when a shrill cry from Holgait caused him to look in that direction. The next instant came a yell of terror from Montgomery Dwight, and Ben saw that the other dude had disappeared.

"What is it?" he cried out, and set off on a run, his gun ready for instant use.

"Gerald! He has fallen over the cliff!" gasped Dwight, his usually doll-like face now actually white with fear.

"Over the cliff!" ejaculated Ben, and dropped his gun. "Where?"

"He went over there,"—Montgomery pointed with his forefinger. "He's killed—mashed up, I know he is! Oh, why did we ever enlist!" And he shook from head to foot.

"Don't be a calf, Mont. Show me exactly where he fell. Here, you say? I can't see him." Ben was down on his knees and gazing far below into the grassy valley. "Come here and look," he went on, but Montgomery shrank back.

"I can't do it—I'll get dizzy and fall, I know I will," the dude faltered. "Perhaps I'd better go ahead for help." And he started off.

"Stop—don't go yet!" called out Ben. He bent over the edge of the cliff again. "Gerald! Gerald Holgait!" he called loudly.

There was no reply, and he shifted his position several yards. He now gained a view of a narrow shelf of rocks, twenty odd feet below the foot-path. The shelf was partly covered with brush and trailing vines, and lying in the midst of the brush was Holgait, his head and shoulders hanging over the edge into space!

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TAKING OF EL CANEY

"I SEE him!"

"Do you? Wher—where is he?" chattered Montgomery. His terror was so great he could scarcely speak.

"Down below here, partly resting upon a narrow ledge," answered Ben.

"And is he — is he —" Montgomery could not finish.

"I don't know whether he's dead or not. He isn't moving, and — There, he is alive! He just moved his left arm! We must get to him, Mont, just as quickly as we can!"

"Get to him?"

"Yes. He is still unconscious, and if he turns over while in that state he'll fall a hundred feet or more. We must get to him without an instant's delay."

"But we can't — I couldn't climb down there for

a thousand dollars," and the dude shuddered. "We had better go ahead for help."

"It won't do — we must act now," insisted Ben. He thought for a second, then took his army roll from his shoulder and released the blanket. "Take hold of this end and brace up against that projecting rock," he ordered. "Quick now, and don't you let go when I let myself over the edge."

"I — I can't — "

"You *must*, Mont. We've got to save Gerald. Take hold, I say." And Ben thrust the end of the blanket into the unwilling volunteer's hands. "Now brace up here, like this. Lay back well, and remember what I told you: don't let the blanket slip under any circumstances."

"Hi! what's the thruble here?" came in the clear voice of Dan Casey, and the next moment the young Irishman was on the scene. He had been just ahead of Holgait and Dwight, and had turned back on the first cry for help.

In a few words Ben explained the situation. "You can help Mont, Dan," he said.

"Sure, I will that. But be careful, me lad, take it aisy like, or we'll lose two off the muster role instid of one."

Reënforced, Montgomery felt more at ease, and he took hold of the blanket timidly. "Never mind, I'll do it," said Casey, and in a trice he had braced himself, and Ben was slipping down over the cliff carefully but rapidly. In less than half a minute he stood beside Holgait on the narrow ledge.

"Oh!" The sound came from the unconscious soldier, and he half raised himself. The movement would have caused him to lose his balance and tumble below into the valley, but just then Ben clutched him and held him fast. "Don't move, Gerald, don't move, if you value your life!" he said.

"My head!" came the reply, with a groan. "Oh, what a fall I had!"

"I know it. But you must keep quiet. We are on a narrow ledge, and it's a mighty dangerous place. I'll get you up to the top again somehow."

Another groan was Holgait's only answer, and Ben called up to Casey, "Throw your blanket down, Dan, and I'll tie him up into a bundle and you can pull him up."

The covering came tumbling down in a minute, and Ben placed the sufferer in it. "Hold tight, if you can — anyway, don't roll out," he said, and tied

one blanket fast to the other. Then he raised Gerald up and called upon Casey to haul away.

It was a hard pull, and once it looked as if the second blanket would become undone and Holgait would be lost. But Casey worked rapidly, and that danger passed by. Once above, the semi-unconscious sufferer was laid back in a safe place in the grass; and then Ben was hauled up.

"You did well, you're brave to the core, so ye are!" burst out Casey. "Going down there is as much as any man would want to be afther doin'!"

At first Montgomery Dwight said but little. But when Ben looked at him he grew very red in the face. "It was a big thing, Ben Russell," he said in a low tone, "a big thing that I shan't forget." For once the foppish coward was heartily ashamed of himself for his former treatment of the lad who had never borne him any ill-will.

There was nothing to do but to go for another soldier, make a temporary stretcher of two poles and a blanket, and carry Gerald Holgait down to the nearest ambulance. Here the surgeon made an examination and found that while no bones had been broken, Gerald had been pretty well bruised and shaken up, and would have to be taken to the

rear. At the time of his going the dude said nothing to Ben about the rescue, but later on he sent a note to the youth, in which he thanked him from the bottom of his heart.

"I shall never forget you," he wrote. "I treated you as meanly as I could, and this is my reward. I always thought I was a gentleman and you were not, but I've found out my mistake. You're the best young fellow I know of, and now that I've resolved to turn over a new leaf, I only hope I can become like you. I wish you every success at the front, and hope you will come out with shoulder straps." Ben showed the communication to no one, yet it did his heart good to receive it. And thus ended the only enmity he had encountered since entering the army.

That evening Ben found himself for the first time upon the firing line. The Spanish forces were known to be but a short distance away, and hasty intrenchments had been thrown up along the brow of a hill overlooking the river. Ben was placed on the lower end of the shelter, with Stummer on one side of him and Wilkens on the other. It was a rainy night, and far from comfortable lying in the wet grass and soil, watching with all eyes for the

alarm that did not come. But they were no worse off than the Spaniards, who lay in a similar trench also waiting. It was the calm before the storm.

For the troops under General Lawton had now reached the vicinity of El Caney, the most northern place to be attacked, and only waited for the signal from General Shafter to begin the battle. A conference of leaders had been held, and it had been decided to force the fighting all along the line on the same day, the army doing its best on land and Sampson's fleet standing off shore and bombarding Santiago from over the heights upon which rested the fortress of Morro Castle.

As has been said, El Caney was a suburb of Santiago, an old-fashioned Cuban resort, with a quaint stone church and queer-looking stone and timber buildings. On a hill-top was built an ornamental blockhouse, and this was garrisoned by a regiment of Spanish soldiery.

The main attack upon El Caney was sustained by the regulars, assisted by the Second Massachusetts Volunteers, a body of young men who fought with the valor of veterans and who will long be remembered among the heroes of "The Hornets' Nest," as the battlefield was christened by the blood of Ameri-

cans and Spaniards alike. The march along the narrow road, now a foot deep with mire, was wearying to the last degree, and it was all Capron's battery, which had been sent with the division, could do to get through. "Up, boys, up!" the drivers of the tugging horses would yell. "Up, boys, we're to knock the Dons to-morrow!" and whip after whip would crack. Then a cannon would go down into a hollow, and eight or ten horses would be required to haul it out. Some of the drivers would lose their patience, especially when the horses bunched up and got in a tangle, but there was nothing to do but make the best of it, and push along steadily despite the rain and the heat.

It was about half-past six on the morning of July the first, that the battery trained upon El Caney opened the fight which was soon to spread down the whole line and be taken up by our warships outside of the harbor. As the hill upon which the town stood was approached, it was found that the Spaniards had made every available use of the blockhouse, the stone church, and of a fort cut in the solid rock. There were also rifle pits with the usual wire barrier, and sharpshooters using smokeless powder had been stationed in the tops of tall

trees and in the church spires, where they might pick off the American officers as opportunity offered. Such are some of the grim details of actual war.

In the meantime, under cover of the smoke and of a patch of woods, General Chaffee's brigade moved swiftly to the rear of the town, thus cutting it off from Santiago.

"Down goes the flag!" The cry was taken up by the gunners of Capron's battery. A well-directed shot had knocked the tower from the Spaniards' fort, and a second shot brought down the flagstaff.

"Give them shrapnel now!" cried the commander of the battery. "They will try to put that rag up again." And shrapnel was poured into the fort so rapidly that, try their best, the Dons could not hoist their standard again.

With Chaffee's brigade in the northeast, and Miles' and Ludlow's brigades to the west and south, a general advance upon El Caney was ordered. Down the hills upon which they were stationed, and up the hill upon which "The Hornets' Nest" was located, rushed our gallant soldiers, the brave Massachusetts Volunteers well to the front.

"Remember the *Maine!*" At first the cry arose only here and there, but presently it became a perfect roar. "Remember the *Maine!*" "Down with the Dons! Hurrah for Uncle Sam!" And then from a distance came the airs of "Yankee Doodle" and "The Star-Spangled Banner." The Spaniards were also yelling and cheering, but what they said was lost in the roar of the battery and the sharp rattle of musketry as line after line opened fire, until the hill appeared to be wrapt in flame and smoke.

"Forward, men! charge!" a captain would cry, and the company would press on, through the deep grass and brush, over treacherous pits and murderous wire barriers, firing when they could, and then dropping to reload. Crack! spat! would come the distant reports of the sharpshooters' firearms, and here and there an officer would be seen to throw up his arms, drop his sword, and sink down, perhaps never to rise again. The men would want to gather around their fallen commander, but no time must be lost, and a lieutenant, or maybe a sergeant, would lead them on, closer and closer, and still closer, to that blockhouse and that fort which must be taken by assault, no matter what the cost.

And so the battle went on, from early morning

into the afternoon. Men were now growing exhausted, and the ambulance corps had more than it could do to take the wounded and fatigued ones to the rear. The outer intrenchments of the Spaniards were now ours, but the fort and the blockhouse were still to be taken. Who would lead that charge into almost certain death?

Who? Every one! There was not a dissenting voice. They were all Uncle Sam's men, ready to do or die, as occasion might require. "Lead us on, that's all!" cried more than one old regular. "We'll go!" yelled the volunteers. "Put us ahead!" The volunteers were fighting at a disadvantage with their smoke-making guns, but this did not daunt them.

Reënforcements consisting of Bates' brigade from Siboney had arrived, and now the rush was on. Shouting and cheering, the soldiers mounted up El Caney hill, straight for the fort and the blockhouse. Bullets flew more thickly than ever, and in the smoke all formation was lost, and a man would attach himself to whatever body of men was nearest to him.

For a moment there was a pause. Would they falter and run? "At 'em, men, and the fort is ours!" came the cry. "Remember the *Maine!*" and the lines closed up and moved onward.

"Hurrah! the fort is ours!" Who started the cry is not known, but soon it was echoed on all sides. The news was true. With that last fire, the Spaniards had started to retreat, leaving all their stores behind. The flight of the enemy encouraged our men to a renewed effort, and in a few minutes the fort was in our possession and the Spaniards were fleeing in all directions, having found their proposed route into Santiago cut off. Many fled to the town and hid in all manner of out-of-the-way places.

With the taking of the fort and the intrenchments near it, El Caney was practically at the mercy of the Americans. Yet the blockhouse offered a stout resistance, and be it said to the credit of the Spanish garrison located there, it was not taken until nearly every one of the men left in the building had given up his life for his flag.

But we must not linger over the glorious battlefield of El Caney. Down at San Juan the battle was also on, and here we will join Ben and his friends, and see how they came out of what has since been called by those who took part, "The Slaughter Pen."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BATTLE OF SAN JUAN

"SURE an' this is nice. We came over here to whip the Dons, an' we end up by takin' a swim, bedad!"

It was Dan Casey who spoke, uttering the words while fording the San Juan River, at a point not far distant from the heights of San Juan.

The entire army had been compelled to cross the stream without the aid of a foot-bridge. Fording-places were from a foot to three feet deep, and though at first clear, the river soon became a muddy torrent, at which many a soldier halted in dismay.

"Well, there's no help for it, Dan," replied Ben, as cheerfully as he could. "And I don't see as it makes any difference anyway," he added. "The rain has soaked me through already."

"Dot's chust it," put in Stummer, with a broad grin. "It vos puts me in mind of a story I hear pout an old lady vot tropped an egg, und dot egg

was pad. 'Vell,' she say, 'dot fall didn't hurt you any.' Chust so dot vater can't hurt us any, can it?" And the German volunteer began to laugh.

General Shafter had been taken sick, and General Wheeler was in command, although he, too, was by no means well and frequently had to lie down on a cot carried forward for him. The "little fighting man of the South" was here, there, and everywhere, and to him was largely due the success of the assault on San Juan.

It had been General Shafter's plan to take El Caney as already described, and while this was going on, Grimes' battery, sent to the heights of El Pozo, overlooking San Juan, was to throw a destructive fire into the San Juan fortifications and at the same time cover the advance of General Kent's division and of General Wheeler's cavalry up the series of hills and over the fields leading to that stronghold. General Kent's soldiers were composed entirely of regulars with the exception of the regiment to which Ben belonged, while the cavalry were also regulars, outside of the Rough Riders. It must be remembered that the cavalry were only so in name, no horses having as yet arrived for them to ride.

Infantry and cavalry had been pushing along side

by side, and more than once Ben had seen Gilbert and had a few words with him. Gilbert was much interested in Frank, and was sorry to learn that the young sergeant was still somewhere in the rear, and not even Ben knew exactly how he was faring.

"We're going to catch it soon, I feel it in my bones," the young Southerner said, on parting at a fork in the road just before the river was reached. "This sickness all around will compel our generals to force the fighting," and in that opinion Gilbert was correct. The campaign must be short and decisive, or the fever would prove a worse enemy than the Spaniards. Every hour men were dropping by the roadside, too ill to go on. Ben had felt sick himself, "awfully stretchy," as he put it, but a big dose of quinine had braced him up, and in addition given him some booming in his ears which was not altogether caused by the cannonading in the distance.

The river passed, the company to which Ben belonged found itself on the side of a hill, grown over with long grass and thick cacti. Here the men deployed, each seeking the best shelter he could find, for they were now within both sight and range of the enemy. The grass, though long,

had been beaten down by the rain, so that it afforded no good hiding-places, while the cacti were full of sharp thorns.

"They're fighting at El Caney, that's certain," remarked Ben to Peter Wilkens, as the two moved slowly forward on their knees under the shelter of a little knoll. The sounds of the distant firing reached them quite plainly.

"Yes, and I hope they're waxin' the Dons good," replied the Yankee youth. "Gee shoo! git down, Ben, quick!"

Ben threw himself flat, not knowing what was coming. High over his head shrieked a shrapnel shell. It burst with great violence in a tree-top behind them, scattering the smaller shot in all directions and wounding several men.

"Thought that was a-comin' straight for us," gasped Peter, as he arose to his knees again, and he and Ben moved forward another ten yards.

"Listen!" cried Ben. The sounds of artillery much closer than El Caney had greeted his ears. Grimes' battery had opened from El Pozo. The shots were directed at the large blockhouse on San Juan hill and at the intrenchments close by, which could be seen to be lined with Spanish troops.

Soon an answering fire from the blockhouse and from another portion of the hill reached our batteries. The smoke from the American guns enabled the enemy to train their field-pieces well, and soon came a hail of shot and shell which brought many a man on the batteries to his end. But the artillery was undaunted and sent forth a hot fire in return, and all the while the infantry and cavalry crept closer and began forming for the final assault.

This was the nerve-testing moment which men and officers alike dreaded. The shelter at hand was not worth mentioning, and soldier after soldier went down in a galling fire which could not, as yet, be returned.

"Oh!" The cry came from Casey, and Ben turned in time to see the gallant Irishman sink upon his knees. "I'm done fer, b'ys!" he moaned, and then fainted. Poor Casey was not killed, however, a bullet having passed through the calf of his leg. In a trice Ben, Stummer, and Wilkens had picked him up and were carrying him to the rear, where the ambulance corps took charge of him. More than anxious to fight, the patriotic Irishman had been cut down at the very opening of the bloody contest.

By the time Ben got back to his position he found the company preparing to make a dash across an open bottom several hundred feet in width. In the centre of the bottom was placed the usual much-dreaded wire fence, fully seven feet high. That it would prove a death trap to many was known to all. Who should make the first assault? Captain Blank, already injured in the left hand, swung his sword on high.

"Come, boys, that fence must be passed. Will you follow me?"

"Yes! yes!" came back the cry. "Come on! Remember the *Maine!*" And away went the company on the double-quick, Ben in the front rank. No sooner had they started than the Spanish opened fire, wounding several. But none of the others stopped. The fence gained, Ben vaulted over, the first soldier to clear it. Captain Blank followed, and the rest came pell-mell, some over and some under, as the wires were cut and ripped apart.

"Company, halt!" rang out the command. "Take aim! Fire!" And then and there Ben fired his first shot for Cuban liberty. Instantly the company reloaded, advanced five yards, and fired again. The smoke became thick, and but

little was to be seen. They had gained a hedge at the foot of San Juan hill, and here they paused to catch their breath and load once more.

"Yer guns make too much smoke!" The growl came from a regular of the Sixteenth Infantry, and soon Ben found himself side by side with the troops of this regiment and of the Sixth, the volunteers and the regulars forming the centre of the attacking column. Not far away were the Rough Riders, pressing up the hill from another point.

"I can't help the gun," answered Ben; "it's the best I've got."

"Throw it away and take this, youngster," went on the regular, and threw over the weapon of a dead comrade, along with the cartridge belt. "The smoke yer makin' is drawin' the enemy's fire right to us." The regular told the truth, and presently some of the volunteers were forced to hold back through orders from the generals in charge.

But Ben went on, his blood thoroughly warmed to the fight. He had seen Casey go down, and now Peter Wilkens followed, with a painful but not serious wound in his side. They were moving right up the side of a steep ascent, and the firing came down almost upon their heads.

"Charge, men, charge!" came the cry. "Don't stop! The victory will soon be ours! Charge!" And again they went on, another hundred feet, through a whistling storm of bullets. Everybody was now firing to suit himself, for no line could be kept on that hillside and the smoke hid friend and foe alike from view.

"Ben!"

The cry came from his left, and looking over his shoulder the young volunteer caught sight of Frank Bulkley, rifle in hand, loading and firing as rapidly as he could.

"Frank! What does this mean!" he ejaculated. "Are you well? Did they let you leave the hospital?"

"I ran away — I wasn't going to stay there while the battle was on," came the short answer. The young sergeant was deadly pale, and his legs fairly trembled beneath him.

"But this is madness, Frank. You are sick, and —"

"I can fight if I am sick, Ben. Come on! Hurrah for Old Glory!" and Frank stumbled on.

"He's out of his head, — that's all there is to it," thought Ben. He wondered what he ought to do.

"Hi, Stummer, come here!" he called out, as the German came into view. "Here is Frank, as mad as a March hare and bound to fight. We ought to get him to the rear."

"Frank! Mine gracious, yes, he must go pack. Of he ton't — He ist dead!"

Stummer broke off short, for Frank had pitched forward suddenly upon his face. Both ran to him, to learn that he had fainted.

"Take him by the feet; I'll take him by the arms," said Ben, quickly, and raising up the unconscious youth they ran back towards the wire fence as fast as they could. Here there was a steady descent of shrapnel; but, undaunted, they passed the barrier, and in five minutes more their companion had been turned over to the hospital corps.

But in those five minutes the ground plan of the battle had shifted, and now it was next to impossible for Ben and Stummer to find their command. "We'll move to the right," said the youth, and did so, only to find himself in the very midst of a detachment of Rough Riders, who were forcing a charge nothing could resist.

"To the front! To the front!" The command

came from the idol of the Rough Riders. "Up, boys, and the victory is ours!" And a ringing cowboy yell followed, with the crash of musketry directly after. The soldiers on all sides were pressing onward, and Ben and Stummer went along, firing as rapidly as possible at the Spaniards, who were now plainly visible in their trenches.

"Ben, by all that's glorious!" It was the voice of Gilbert, and the young Southerner came up, loading his gun as he moved. "And Stummer, too. Oh, but we're having a fight now, aren't we?"

"I should say so!" answered Ben, pausing to wipe the perspiration from his dripping brow. "It seems to me we're having half a dozen battles in one."

"That's about the size of it, my boy. If we gain this hill, Santiago is doomed. Come on!" And he moved forward, with Ben and Stummer at his side. They were now among the rocks and stubble, and progress was necessarily slow. The firing line of the Spaniards, collected near the top of the hill, was over a mile in length, and this belched forth flame and death continually. Small

wonder that San Juan was termed "The Slaughter Pen"!

In no battle covered by American history had the officers been more to the front than in this struggle before Santiago. To the truth of this the long list of killed and wounded testifies. They were leaders in fact as well as in name, and by their personality urged the men under them on to victory.

Presently Ben, Stummer, and Gilbert found themselves in a slight depression, overshadowed by a jutting rock. Here they paused, to reload once again. Ben had just slipped a cartridge in the Krag-Jorgensen given him by the regular, when a deep groan startled him. Almost at his feet lay a wounded major of the regulars, shot through the side.

"Water!" whispered the officer, hoarsely. "For the love of heaven, water!"

"I'll get you some, if it's to be had," answered Ben. He looked about, and seeing a tiny spring under an edge of the rock, ran to it and filled his tin cup. In the meantime Stummer and Gilbert propped the wounded man up and placed a tuft of soft grass behind his head.

As Ben turned back with the water he heard a bump, bump, on the rocks over the hollow, and the next instant a large, unexploded shell dropped close to the feet of the wounded officer. It rolled a few feet further, then settled tightly in a crevice between the stones.

"Dot's loaded! It's going off!" yelled Stummer, and tumbled back with all possible haste. "Safe yourself, Gilbert. Safe yourself, Pen!" And he grabbed the Southerner by the arm.

Ben stood transfixed. Stummer was right; the shell was loaded, and the fuse was smoking at a lively rate. If it went off, it would kill them all, unless they managed to get out of the way. Ben gave a leap backward. Then he thought of the wounded officer, and came to a halt.

CHAPTER XXIX

BEN WINS HIS SHOULDER STRAPS

"I CAN'T leave him here to die!"

Such was the thought which rushed through the young volunteer's mind, as he glanced first at the wounded regular and then at the shell, now smoking and sizzing more lively than ever. In a few seconds more the shell would explode.

"Save yourself!" yelled Gilbert. Then he too stood still, realizing the officer's peril. In an instant he was beside the shell and trying to dislodge it. But the task was hopeless, and he followed Stummer to a safe distance.

Ben saw him go and looked at the shell again. "We must carry the man off —" he began, then turned suddenly with his cup of water. Could he do it? He *must!* He dropped on his knees and uttered a silent prayer to God for success.

The fuse of the shell was still several inches long, but was rapidly growing less. Clutching it be-

tween his fingers he sank it into the cup of water and held it there. Would the water penetrate far enough? Holding his breath he waited, — a few seconds which to him in his agony of mind was an eternity.

"Is it — is it out?" The question came from the wounded officer, who had for the moment closed his eyes.

Ben waited a few seconds longer. "Yes, it's out," he answered in a hoarse whisper.

"Thank God!"

The eyes of the two met, and no more was said. Soon Gilbert and Stummer came running up. "You're the bravest man I ever saw, Ben!" cried the Southerner. "What splendid nerve!"

"I couldn't haf done dot, not me," put in Stummer, with a vigorous shake of his head. "It vos grand, Pen; you deserve shoulder straps for dot. Ain't dot so?" And the German volunteer turned to the regular.

"Yes — and he shall have them, if I can bring it about," was the determined although weak reply. "What is your name, lad?"

"Ben Russell, sir."

"I am Major Starwell. The water, please." The

major took a deep drink. "That makes me feel better. If you — ah, here come some of my own men now. Kindly call them."

The request was complied with, and soon the major of the regulars was being carried to the rear; and then Ben and his companions hurried on, but with much more sober faces than before.

The battle had now reached that point when success or failure seemed to hang upon a thread. The Americans, almost exhausted, had not yet reached the brow of the hill upon which the blockhouse was located. The Spaniards, also worn out, continued to fire, but with an unsteadiness which showed they were on the verge of breaking away. Hillside and trenches were thickly strewn with the dead and the dying. A decided assault on one side or the other would win the day.

It was then that Brigadier-General Hawkins came to the front, aided by Lieutenant-Colonel Roosevelt, and many other officers, and urged the men as never before. "You can do it, boys! Charge! charge!" was the cry. "Hurrah for the Stars and Stripes! Hurrah for Old Glory! We are going in with you, boys! Come!" And the "boys" came, several thousand strong, firing as they climbed the last rise

A Spaniard was in the Act of running him through Page 287

of the hill, through a holocaust of flame, bullets, and shrapnel. Once they wavered, — as scores went down, — but only for a moment. Then on they swept, yelling, cheering, and singing, in a delirium of excitement no pen can describe. The first of the trenches were gained, victory was within their grasp. Somebody started that favorite which will never die :

> "The army and navy forever!
> Three cheers for the red, white, and blue!"

A hundred voices joined in a chorus which even the rattle of musketry and the roars of cannon could not drown. Ben sang too, and fought the better for it.

And then came that final assault upon the block-house, where steel met steel and guns were discharged at close range. The smoke was suffocating, and enemy and friend could scarcely be told apart. Ben, Gilbert, and Stummer kept close beside one another, but in a rush over the slippery grass, worn almost into a paste by thousands of feet, Ben fell flat on his back. Ere he could rise he found himself confronted by a fierce-looking Spaniard, who, with bayonet fixed, was in the act of running him through.

"Don't!" he cried, and tried to roll out of the way. But with a grin the Don pressed closer, until the point of the bayonet was within half a foot of Ben's throat. Then came the crack of a rifle, and the Spaniard pitched to one side, shot through the back.

"Carl! You saved my life!" burst from the young volunteer's lips.

"I guess dot's so," muttered Stummer. "Git up, kvick!" And he assisted Ben to rise. No more was said just then, yet the youth could not help but think of his narrow escape. "How glad I am I jumped overboard for Carl when he was in danger of drowning in New York Bay," he thought.

Gilbert had gone to the very base of the blockhouse, where a dozen Rough Riders were fighting furiously, with an equal number of Spaniards, over the possession of one of the Dons' flags. Crack! bang! went the guns, and click, clack! the sabres, striking fire, and then the Spaniards set off on the retreat, following thousands already ahead of them.

"The blockhouse is abandoned!" What a cheering and yelling went up! The flag was down, and soon Old Glory floated proudly to the breeze. "On to Santiago!" came the rallying cry, and the tired

troops pressed on, over the top of the hill, driving the enemy from one trench and shelter to another, until the whole of the hill was cleared.

It had been a hard-earned victory, both at El Caney and at San Juan, and the losses were large, to the Americans, — 230 men killed, 1203 wounded, and many missing. The enemy's losses were probably about the same. Twenty-two of our gallant officers had fallen to rise no more, and the Spanish commanding officer, General Linares, had been seriously wounded and his second in command killed. A few of the Cubans had taken part in the contests, and they, too, had suffered.

Although tired out, now was no time for resting; for the Spaniards, although routed, were not yet driven into Santiago. As soon as the victories at El Caney and San Juan were assured, fresh troops from the rear were ordered up, and intrenchments were dug wherever it appeared they might be of benefit. While this was in progress, the ambulance corps and the assistants of the Red Cross Society began the removal of the wounded, the majority being sent back to Siboney. Over these heart-rending scenes it is perhaps best I draw the curtain.

The sun had gone down, red and dull, over the waters of Santiago Bay, and now the pale, cold moon arose, an emblem of peace and quiet. From the top of San Juan hill could be seen the far-away lights of Santiago, twinkling across a valley filled with mist, — the doomed city, as the soldiers told one another. Here and there, in the valley, could be seen the camp-fires of the defeated, burning a sort of defiance to those on the hill-tops. On the morrow they would fight again, with the reënforcements which General Garcia's Cuban guards had been unable to hold back.

"My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of Liberty,
Of thee I sing!"

Soft but clear arose the song from one end of the trenches on the hills. One soldier after another, though worn and hungry, took it up, until nearly all were singing. And then the wounded, gazing up at the rising moon, so pure, so sweetly calm, joined in: —

"Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side,
Let freedom ring!"

Throughout the night the soldiers kept on singing, only breaking off to swallow the rations which were presently brought to them, slim eating indeed, after such a fierce day's work. Yet no one murmured if the hardtack was extra hard and the coffee muddy and half cold. They were heroes and thought only of the duty to be performed.

Ben had received permission to go to the rear, to ascertain how Frank, Casey, and the others were doing. He found Frank asleep. "He's in for a regular spell of it," said the surgeon in charge. "He'll be lucky if he escapes with his life. We'll have to get him away from this climate on the first hospital ship which goes north." And so it was afterwards arranged, and Frank was taken first to Tampa and then sent home, where loving hands speedily nursed him back to health and strength.

Casey looked haggard, but was cheerful. "I don't mind me wound, Ben," he said. "It was all for the glory of the Stars an' Stripes, ye know. Go in an' lick 'em!" And then he turned away, to suppress a groan that had to come.

Peter Wilkens had been shot in the hand, and was sitting around with that member in a sling.

"A dirty Don hit me with his Mauser," he said. "The doctor said as how he guessed the knuckle was broken. But I don't care — the Don got it in the side — I saw him fall. I reckon we'll sweep 'em into the bay in a day or two." And to forget his pain Peter began to walk around and whistle "Yankee Doodle." No one in that sick camp was going to show the "white feather" if he could help it.

It was after midnight when Ben returned to the firing line. His heart was sick because of the awful scenes he had witnessed. Why should civilized nations go to war in this cruel fashion? he asked himself. Then he braced up and took a long breath. Now was no time to ask such questions. To-morrow the battle would be on again, and he must be prepared to do his duty.

CHAPTER XXX

"ON TO SANTIAGO!" — CONCLUSION

"WAKE up, Carl; it's time to get into fighting trim once more."

"Ach, Pen, vot you vakes me for? I vos chust treamin' of mine faderland — a peautiful tream apout ven I vent to school in Bremen," answered Stummer, ruefully, as he sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Vere ve vos, ennahow? Oh, I remember now! Is dem Spaniards coming?" And now the German volunteer leaped up and grabbed his rifle.

"No — not just yet," laughed Ben. "But we might as well get a bite of breakfast before they do come — if it's to be had," concluded the youth.

Stummer had fallen into a doze an hour before in spite of the singing and cheering. Now both left the intrenchments and started over to where the company's cook was dealing out such provender as he possessed. "We ain't dinin' at Delmonico's to-day, boys," said Crowley, "but I'm reckoning

on serving you from one of the best hotels in Santiago before the week is out."

"And you will!" came the cry. The soldiers took all they could get, and hurried back to their places to eat their early breakfast as opportunity afforded.

It was soon learned that the enemy had not fled as far in the direction of Santiago as anticipated. Moreover, they had thrown up strong rifle pits during the night, and their reënforcements were being pushed to the front as rapidly as possible. More than this, Cervera's fleet, lying before Santiago, had now obtained the range of the hills occupied by the Americans, and it began to pour in a more or less effective fire.

A skirmish occurring at Aguadores between some Spanish infantry and our volunteers from Michigan, fresh troops that had just arrived, had resulted in something of a drawn battle; and now the volunteers were free to move towards San Juan, as were also some regulars who had been held in reserve.

The fighting began early, but it was well towards noon before anything like a serious engagement was on. The fresh troops were forced to the front, and for a while Ben was compelled to rest, although

eager for the fray. "On to Santiago!" was the battle-cry. "Hurrah for Uncle Sam! On to Santiago!" and for several hours it looked as if our troops would certainly make a rush through the enemy's lines, and gain entrance into the city. The troops from Michigan were now reënforced by others from their own state, and by the Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, who had just arrived on transports from the United States.

It was getting towards sundown when word was passed that the Spaniards were forming for some new move — what was not as yet exactly known. The fighting stopped for a short time, and every soldier lay down on guard. Soon the sun had disappeared, but the clear moon made the vast battlefield almost as bright as day.

The shock came at ten o'clock, when the Spanish army, massed for the encounter, attempted to turn the American lines. Again broke forth that storm of shot and shell, and again the bullets whistled as thickly as hailstones. The savage attack lasted until midnight, when, utterly routed, the Spaniards began to fall back into the city, leaving their dead and dying behind them. They took to the side roads, where, under the trees and brush, it was

impossible, even in the moonlight, to pursue them. Here and there a stand was made, and on the morning of the third of July desultory firing was indulged in, but the victory was ours, and the American forces pressed closer and closer, until Santiago was hemmed in from water's edge to water's edge. There is no doubt but that the city could have been taken within forty-eight hours. But this would have cost a tremendous loss of life, and rather than make such a needless sacrifice, new intrenchments were thrown up, guns were put into place, and the doomed city was placed in a state of siege. On the 16th of July, 1898, it was surrendered to us, along with all the Cuban territory to the east of it, covering about 4000 square miles of territory and containing upward of 20,000 Spanish troops, all of whom were compelled to throw down their arms. One day later Old Glory was run up on the flagstaff of Santiago's civil government buildings; and the campaign came to an end in a blaze of glory.

It is perhaps needless to say that Captain Blank was proud of the part his "boys" had played in the contest. "You did nobly — nobly," he said. "You could not have done better."

It had become noised about that Ben had saved the life of a major of the regulars, and that something had been said about shoulder straps. "He'll get them — for he deserves them," said Gilbert. And the Rough Rider was right. Major Starwell did not rest until Ben was privileged to don the shoulder straps of a second lieutenant.

"And he'll go higher; mark my words," said the major. "He'll go higher. He's a true soldier, every inch of him!"

Here we must, for the time being, leave "A Young Volunteer in Cuba." We have followed Ben through the state and national camps, and through a number of adventures while "Fighting for the Single Star." We have seen him face death bravely, and now that the fighting was over, the intrepid youth was not above descending to the dull monotony of life in the trenches, doing his duty as a soldier through fair weather or foul.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Ben's brother Walter had, on the breaking out of the war, joined the navy. It had been Walter's earnest desire to join Commodore Schley's flagship, the *Brooklyn*, and this wish had been gratified. In another vol-

ume, to be called "Fighting in Cuban Waters; Or, The Haps and Mishaps of a Young Gunner," we shall see what part Walter played in "bottling up" Admiral's Cervera's fleet in Santiago Bay, and how gallantly the young gunner fought when the Spanish warships endeavored to escape. In this volume we shall again meet Ben, and also Larry Russell, who has served so faithfully "Under Dewey at Manila," and likewise learn more concerning Job Dowling and his reformation and the mystery of the stolen heirlooms. Gilbert and our other friends will not be forgotten.

And now let us shake Ben Russell by the hand, and wish him well. Life had still much in store for him, yet, come what might, it was not likely he would forget those stirring times when he joined the army and marched forth to become "A Young Volunteer in Cuba."

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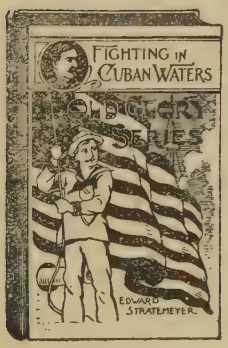

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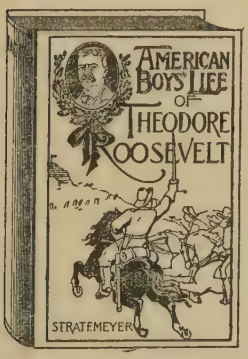

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